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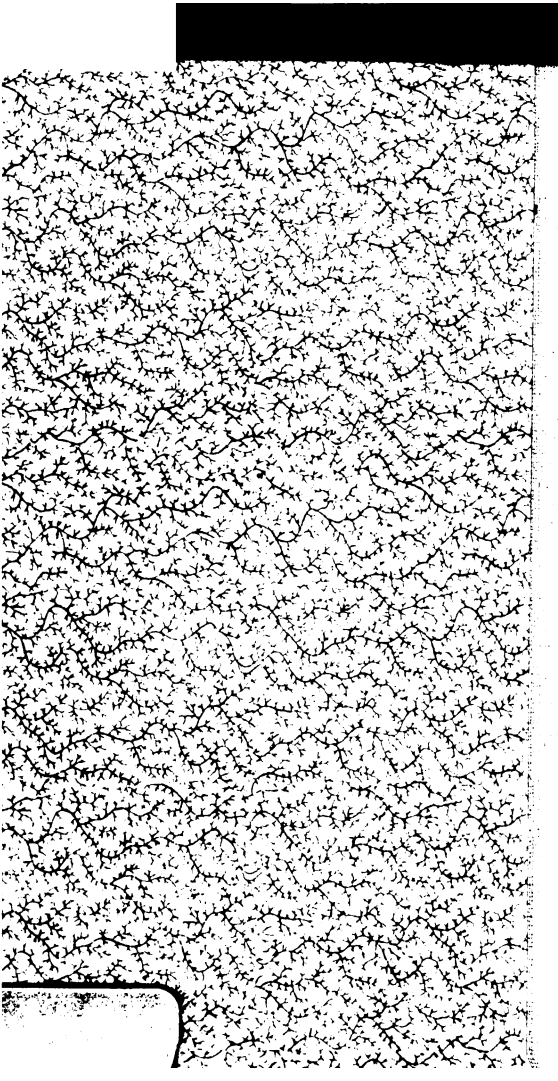

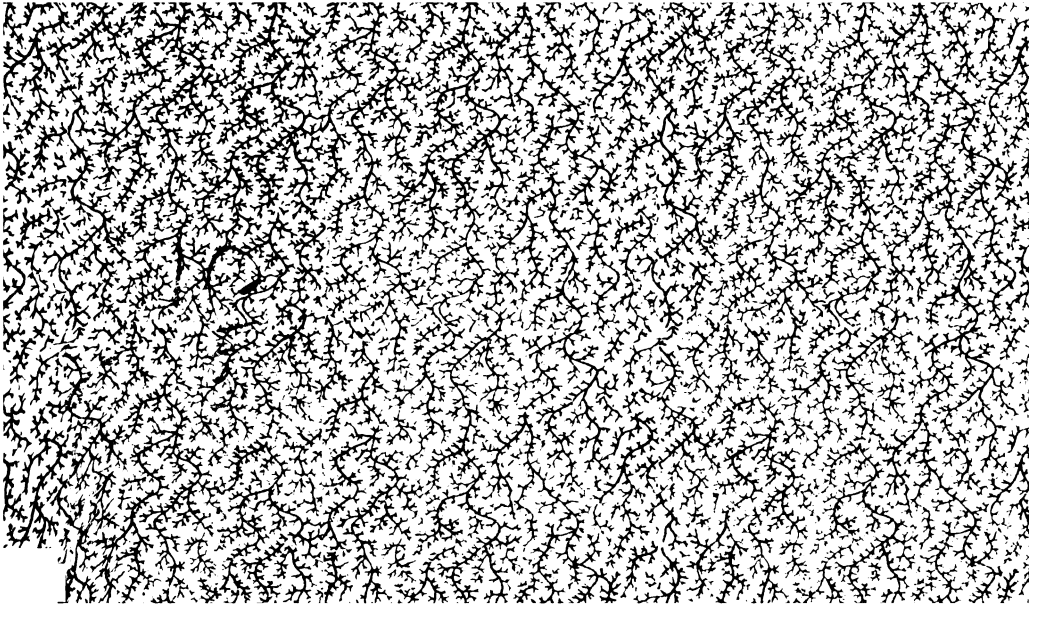

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THE INUNDATION.

CHAPTER I.

On a gorgeous July evening, a few summers ago, the setting sun was insinuating, here and there, a slanting beam into the recesses of a rocky gorge on the coast of Cumberland.—Sheltered against the stirring breezes of the Irish Sea by a sudden inclination towards the north, a few hundred yards above the spot where a brook, called the Dudbourne, oozed into the sands on issuing from the jaws of the defile, the sequestered security of the spot created in its favour the charm usually attached to prohibition.—

During the drought prevailing at that fervid season of the year, it seemed impossible that nature should have created in the vast table-land skirted by that bold and dangerous coast, so deep a cleft as Dudbourne Dale, solely to afford a watercourse to a stream so shallow that the stones forming its channel lay upon the surface, instead of indenting the smooth green turf; in many places so little moistened by the waters of the brook, that they might have passed for the causeway of a giant abiding in the wilderness, of which the cliffs rising perpendicularly on either side, represented the ramparts.—

Other road, at all events, there was none through the valley. Throughout the greater portion of its length, which, between the estuary of the Dudbourne and the fall called Dudbourne Force, by which it issued from the mountain-tarn of Duddonwater, was nearly two miles in extent, a broad green margin afforded summer-pasturage for a herd of the small cattle of the country, and a seaward path for occasional stragglers from the adjoining town of Duddonstone. And though, in one

or two of the almost angular turns of the valley, the gangway became so narrow that, after the setting-in of the autumnal rains, it was difficult to pass dryshod,—during the greater part of the year, Dudbourne Dale constituted a channel "a world too wide for the shrunk" stream from which its name was derived.—

Such naturalists, however, as, in the course of their wanderings in Lakeland, found their way into that remote pass, were apt to notice that, among the fragments of rock embedded at various distances in the turf, were specimens of quartz and schist, and other formations foreign to those of the surrounding cliffs: as though the mountain-brook which sometimes hissed and foamed over the stones, and sometimes stole timidly between their fissures, had been, at some remote period, a powerful torrent, whose impetuous waters brought with them the products of a remote district; which they bequeathed as signs and landmarks of a dominion they were too feeble to maintain.—Like the Lissa, in short, and other *rivulets of the* Cumbrian dales, the Dudbourne

exhibited the equivocal tokens of departed grandeur which characterize a mediatized German prince.—

But what it had lost in consequence, the dale it traversed gained annually in beauty.—Every year, drifts of earth brought down from the table-land above by the driving of the winter storms, by filling the nooks and crevices of the cliffs, afforded ground for richer vegetation than the mosses and lichens clothing the ruder crags.—Patches of broom and heath had long redeemed the dreary barrenness of the spot. The bright bells of the foxglove opposed their imperial hues to the dun surface of the rocks from which projected the silvery stems and quivering foliage of the birch and aspen; while the flexile streamers of intermatted briar-rose and bramble overhung the perpendicular wall of sandstone that afforded no fissure for the insinuation of their fibres.

In the height of summer, when all this vegetation was at its fullest, and the water-flowers, whose searching roots were not to be cheated by the pre*tended disappearance* of the brook, sent up their

spreading blossoms under which the pale blue forget-me-not clustered in richest exuberance, Dudbourne Dale was just such a spot as fairies might have delighted in, when fairies dwelt upon the earth ;—lonely,—lovely,—tranquil;—with nothing to be seen but the richly-embroidered brocade of nature's robes, and nothing to be heard but their rustling.—

"Provoking enough, if, after all, I should have mistaken my road!" exclaimed a young traveller, who, on the evening in question, had traversed the whole length of the dale, till he came within view of the ocean, whose advancing tides glowed under the reflection of the setting sun: after gazing for many minutes on which, in silent admiration, he was glad to retreat from the glare into the recesses of the dale from which he had just emerged.

"It is just six hours," he resumed, "since I left Duddon Bridge; and if I have been blockhead enough to mistake the directions given me by the good woman at the Nag's Head. it will be dark before *I can find* my way back, even so far as

Duddonstone, where I have no mind to sleep.—I had reckoned so surely on putting up for the night at old Atfield's!—Better be jogging, however, upon my way, unless I wish to be benighted in the confounded desert which I have been ass enough to mistake for Dudbourne Dale!"—

But it was clear, from the peevishness with which he struck his ashen walking-stick into the turf, as he retraced his plodding steps, that he was grievously out of sorts, both with himself and the scenery, which, only half-an-hour before, while still believing himself on the threshold of old Atfield's abode, had moved his enthusiasm.—For the picturesque is a sorry substitute for a supper and a bed; and at the age of the traveller, (a year or two on the beardy side of twenty,) solitude, though a pleasant interlude, becomes tedious on compulsion.—He was sadly in want of a companion, to whom to expand into ecstasies on the beauties (and intricacies) of Lakeland!—

"An eagle, by Jupiter!—I did not know they *were ever seen* southward of Skiddaw,' cried he,

when two or three angular turns having brought him nearly a mile inland, only an occasional pinnacle of the cliffs continued to be gilded by the setting sun.—But a second glance at the object thus apostrophised, convinced him that his first view had been too ambitious; and that the bird, circling in one of the windings of the valley, was only a large kite.

"I wonder what sort of prey it is after?" mused the traveller.—"The small birds are at roost.—But a kite, of that size, could carry off a stoat or weasel." Then uttering a shrill cry, less for the purpose of scaring the marauder from his prey than for the pleasure of watching its precipitate ascent, he saw with surprise that the spot over which the kite was hovering, was a considerable ledge of land, formed, in some earlier age, by an extensive landslip; and so thickly edged round with alder and maple, where the abutments rose some six or eight feet above the valley, as to mask the spot from casual observation.

Even after ascertaining the existence of the enclosure, which he had overlooked at his first transit, *he was* as much puzzled to know how to

reach the dwelling he trusted it might contain, as the assailants of Robinson Crusoe's fort to escalade the walls, when once his ladders were drawn in.—Fifty yards further, however, a few rough steps cut in the sand-stone, indicated a path which, turning behind the alder bushes, was little calculated to attract the observation of strangers.

The kite-scarer hurried joyfully up the rude pathway; till stopped by the wicket of a small close, planted with lucerne, and dotted with fruit-trees:—the upper portion of which consisted of a neat garden, walled in on two sides of the triangular area by the perpendicular cliffs of Dudbourne Dale.

"No wonder I was ready to make affidavit that neither house nor home stood within the limits of the valley!" cried the young man, as he surveyed the well-planted garden and bright flower-beds. "Who could have expected to find such a spot as this, out of the fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains, or the wilds of New Zealand!—John Atfield ought to have apprized me that his family lived in a *cavern.*"

And his fastidious eye glanced disparagingly over the façade of a small two-storied house, that appeared to peep out of the rocks on which it abutted. Further on, an irregular but considerable range of out-buildings was niched into the sand-stone; with the same rash trust that creates so many strange-looking dwellings in the neighbourhood of our sea-port towns, or on the banks of the Wye or Avon.

He was not long left to his conjectures concerning the "cavern" of the Atfields.—His interference with the evening meal of the kite (some young Guinea-chicks exercising their powers of mischief in the garden) had roused the attention of the inmates. —A shaggy, crook-legged lad, whose deformity announced him to be a cow-boy, was scratching his ear with an inquiring air in front of the cattle-sheds; while on a jutting ledge of rock at the extremity of the garden, commanding a view of the dale, stood a young girl, whose good-humoured face and well-turned figure elicited an exclamation of "Prissy Atfield!"—

Beckoning the lad towards him, the traveller

hastened to inquire whether his master were within; and, on being answered in the negative, was about to express a desire to enter the house, and await Mr. Atfield's return, when, lo! the damsel who, in the interim, had caught sight of the intruder, hurried down from her "coign of vantage,"—made her way along the gravel-walk,—and civilly accosted him.—

"My father is seldom out long after sundown," said she, in answer to his renewed inquiries.—"I expect him home to tea. If you have business with him, sir, pray wait in the house."

CHAPTER II.

Another minute, and, following her hospitable guidance, he had crossed the threshold of what, in a moment of petulance, he had presumed to call "a cavern;" and on reaching the parlour, where tea was laid out to await Farmer Atfield's return, was half inclined to change the name into palace:—so fresh and fragrant an atmosphere breathed through the open window from the little flower-garden upon which it opened, where the evening dew was rapidly rising;—so inviting appeared the home-made bread and butter, and country cream;—so white the homespun table-cloth,—so tempting the farmer's old arm-chair! And if the traveller chanced to remember that, beside the clear-burning fire of the kitchen they had traversed, there lay a *gridiron*, and certain slices of smoked salmon,

which the old woman presiding there evidently kept in preparation to be served hot on her master's appearance,—be it accepted in extenuation that he had accomplished fourteen miles since morning, and dined at noon.—

Both these circumstances, indeed, he lost no time in explaining to his pretty hostess, as an excuse for his readiness in accepting the seat she offered. A little surprised that the announcement called forth no expression of commiseration, he could not forbear adding, "and fourteen miles in this hill-and-dale country may surely count against twenty along a good turnpike road!"—

"You are from the South, then, sir?" demanded Prissy, in a tone where some compassion was at length perceptible.

"From London," replied the stranger, with an air of self-complacency, implying that he considered the fact satisfactorily attested by his personal appearance.—And Priscilla, who found herself conversing, for the first time in her life, with a citizen *of the Great Babylon*, although the affability of his

deportment evinced no undue pride in the distinction, could not refrain from momentary regret that the work-a-day gown and straw bonnet in which she had been surprised, should entitle her to so low a place in his estimation.— Her second thoughts, however, were best.

"If you are from London," she resumed, "perhaps you may be acquainted with my brother John?"—

And so clearly did she read in the smile which seemed to answer her query, a reproof of the folly which supposed that, in a capital containing a million and a half of inhabitants, so humble an individual as John Atfield, an engineer's articled apprentice, could not escape notice, that she felt called upon to add, "But I ask your pardon, sir. We country-folks are apt to forget that it is not in London as at Duddonstone; where the few who are not akin to their townspeople, hold together at least as neighbours."—

She might have spared her apology. Instead of listening, her guest, having started from his seat,

was leaning over the window-sill, admiring the rich tints of a bed of Prussian stocks, and inhaling the fragrance of the honeysuckle and musk-roses trained over the rough frontage of the house.—

"Crony!" he suddenly exclaimed, "Cro,—old Cro!"—as a venerable-looking tan-coloured lurcher stalked along the gravel-walk leading to the house, in the rear of a hale-looking old man, wearing the blue smock-frock of the district. And though the dog contented itself with stopping short for a second, as if indignant at hearing its name pronounced by an unfamiliar voice, the astonishment of Priscilla Atfield was far greater than that of Crony.

In breathless agitation, she laid her hand on the sleeve of the stranger.

"From London, and acquainted with our dog's name?"—faltered she.—"Pray, pray, sir,—tell me the truth!—You bring us news from my brother?—Not bad ones, surely, or you would not look so pleased!"—

A letter placed in her hand, in that beloved *brother's handwriting*, afforded an immediate answer

to her questions.—For in the corner was inscribed, in clerkly text, "to the care of Mr. Mark Egley." And before the delighted girl had time to extend her hand to welcome the bosom-friend of her dear John,—the "Mark" of whom they were accustomed to write and talk as though he were the old acquaintance of the whole family,—Farmer Atfield made his appearance; not, like his daughter, to be perplexed and awkward; but to exclaim, with cordial glee, "Master Egley, I'm main glad to see ye!"—as though the traveller were an expected guest.

So little expected, however, by poor Priscilla, that, as soon as he became engaged in explanations to his host of his difficulties in finding his way to a spot so sequestered, she stole out of the room to issue orders to Ruth, for the better credit of her housekeeping; and if, on her return, there were cause to surmise from the smoothness of her braided hair and gloss of her black silk apron, that she had bestowed a little passing attention on her looking-glass, she had not been less careful about the airing

of the best linen for their only spare chamber; which, though untenanted for the last four years, still went by the name of "Master Johnny's room."

The proof that she had been peremptory as well as active in her orders, was that the old woman's grumblings commenced the moment the parlour door closed upon her young mistress.—Amid the hissing of the fire and sputtering of the gridiron while fresh eggs and rashers were preparing, exclamations of—"The Lord be good to us—Sooch foossing for a foreigner!—They cooldna' do more for Maister Johnnie himsel'"—were distinctly audible.

For Ruth made no allowance for the circumstance that Mark Egley was the first of young Atfield's friends who had crossed his father's threshold; and was ignorant of his near relationship to the patron who had done as much towards "Maister Johnnie's" advancement in life, as though he had been a son of his own.—

"But how came it, lad, that when ye got to *Dudd'nst'n*, ye made no inquiry at the Nag's Head

a'ter Master Atfield?" demanded the former, watching with delight the inroads made by his guest into his brown loaf.

"Because, sir, thanks to my bad memory, or my friend John's bad writing, I fancied it was at Duddon *Bridge* I was to hear news of you.—There I dined; and there I passed, I suspect, for having escaped from a lunatic asylum, from the eagerness with which I kept assuring every elderly man I met that his name was Atfield!—But even at the Nag's Head, (which Johnny was at so much pains to knock into mine), they knew nothing of you.—All the landlord could do was to satisfy me by the help of a county map, of what I nothing doubted, *i.e.*, that such a place as Dudbourne Dale existed between that and Ravenglass,—though, thanks to the flies and tobacco-smoke which had converted white paper into brown, it was not easy to distinguish *where*."—

"And all that time," cried the old man, in a tone of vexation, "or, rather, all the time you've been *trudging from* pillar to post in search of what lay

close under your nose. there was I. Master Egley, fretting the a'ternoon out;—part in Dudd'nst'n market-place, and part in the tap o' the Nag's Head, —according as Johnny's letter had agreed on."

"You expected Mr. Egley, then, father?" demanded Priscilla, vexed and surprised at having been kept in the dark.

"Only sin' three o'clock, my dear,—when I found a letter from your brother lying for me at the Post Office," replied the farmer.—"If I'd know'd sooner of his coming, d'ye think I wouldn't have sent a man and horse as far as Dudd'n Bridge, to fetch him?"—

"By which, you would have spared your tea-table the ravages I am making, my dear sir," observed Mark, good-humouredly:—"but by which I should have lost the most beautiful walk I ever enjoyed in my life."—

"A beautiful walk? No, no! truth to tell, the road's a main bad un!"—said old Atfield,—with a countryman's genuine insensibility to the picturesque—"*Up hill*, and down dale!—Even to me,

as is used to it, the bridle-way, over Whitbeck, is a breather!"—

"I admit that your heathy fells have left me scarcely a leg to stand on," rejoined Mark, laughing. "Yet I have had enough of London pavement in my life, to wish I might never look again on a mile of level ground!"—

"For the sake o' man and beast, lad, ye'd say otherwise with the tillage of a farm on your hands!" rejoined his host;—when, lo! an exclamation from Priscilla, who, between the pauses of her tea-making, had taken advantage of their chat to cast her eyes over her brother's letter, interrupted their colloquy.

"Not a word, *now!*" whispered Mark, leaning towards her chair, on pretence of picking up a teaspoon which, with timely awkwardness, he managed to throw down.—And the surprise with which Priscilla heard and submitted to his injunction, was rapidly followed by the feeling of intimacy created by a secret understanding.—

"*In short*, my dear Mr. Atfield," resumed Mark,

again addressing the farmer, as if following up their previous conversation, "I am just now as wild after mountain-scenery as might be expected of a poor cockney,—wandering, for the first time in his life, beyond the sound of Bow bell!"

"Ay, ay! Johnnie's letter informed me that you were not much of a traveller," said the old man in a tone of paternal superiority;—"but that, having business as far as Lancaster for your grandfather's firm, you had got leave to push on for a few days; and, besides making acquaintance with the bumpkins at Dudbourne Dale, see all that was to be seen hereabouts."—

"You struck off, of course, from Dalton, to visit the iron mines, and Furness Abbey?"—inquired Prissy, anxious perhaps to discover whether their new friend's motives were precisely such as he alleged.—

"Out of three or four days, how was I to find time?"—retorted the Londoner.—"Do me the justice to believe that I was in all haste to get here,—*and fulfil my* promise to my friend Johnny,"

added he, in a lower voice, as if afraid of incurring, on his own account, the charge of over-assiduity.

"I wish Mr. Egley," rejoined Prissy, "that you, who are no doubt in the secrets of the firm, could afford us hope that my brother will be allowed a peep, one of these days, at the old Cumbrian hills he seems to have forgotten?—My father is getting in years."—

"A hard matter to believe, while I sit looking Mr. Atfield in the face!" interrupted their guest, with a glance at the hale countenance of the handsome old patriarch, who had long accomplished his allotted threescore years and ten.—"However, now the railroad has brought your mountains within visiting-distance of Milbank, I dare say Johnnie will not be slow in taking advantage of it.—Does his letter say nothing of such a project?"—

Inferring from the question that she was released from her engagement to secrecy, Prissy was beginning,—"Of course it does; and refers me to *you* for further particulars!" when she was luckily *interrupted by her* father, who could not allow an

allusion to the railroad to pass without remonstrance.—

"Rather spend as many more years without seeing him under my roof as I've done since, thanks to your good grandfather, Mr. Mark, he left us to be indentured, than have him risk life and limb by your newfangled ways o' tempting providence!" cried he.

"Do not expect me, sir, to join in decrying what has been the means of placing me in my present happy situation," retorted Mark, accepting a third cup of tea from the hands of his hostess.—"And as to tempting providence, dear Mr. Atfield, you, who have, probably scores of times in your life, dashed across the Lancaster sands, have surely no right to quarrel with the dangers of a railway?"—

"I don't want to quarrel with nothin' nor nubbody, sir," answered the farmer, a little puzzled by the phraseology of his London acquaintance.—"But this I know, that matters may run faster in the world than they did in my youth, in the times of *the good old king* who set his face again' Papists

and Frenchmen, without being any the safer.—Wiser folks than your humble servant have still to make up their minds whether steam ben't an invention of the powers of darkness!"

"Come, come, my dear Mr. Atfield! All this sounds like high treason to a born-and-bred engineer!"—cried the young guest. "The adoption of steam-machinery has doubled the business of our house, and the fortunes of my family."

A question of interest was never lightly dealt with by Farmer Atfield. But while he proceeded to cross-examine poor Mark concerning the engagements and prospects of his venerable grandfather James Egley, whose calling possessed an awful and mysterious character in his unlettered eyes, old Ruth saw fit to bring in candles; much to the regret of the two younger members of the trio, who found the balmy atmosphere and thickening twilight highly favourable to the advancement of their sociability. Priscilla felt that she should not be able to listen half so comfortably to the sallies of the Londoner, now that he was able to examine her

varying hues of her complexion; and even Mark would have been content to exchange his survey of her sweet countenance, for the still greater delight of finding her perfectly at ease.

But, alas! the share he occupied in her attention arose so entirely out of the letter of which he was the bearer, that already she was growing a little impatient for her father's signal for retiring to rest; that she might peruse, at leisure, the wondrous tidings, concerning which he had not even allowed her to express surprise. Poor Prissy felt almost ashamed of the inhospitable haste with which she hurried over her "good night;" and leaving to Ruth the care of ascertaining that all was in order for their guest, locked herself into her room, to indulge, without further interruption, in the ejaculations that could not fail to arise from learning that her brother,—her only brother,—was an engaged man:—not simply that he was in love, and thinking of matrimony; but that he had offered his hand and heart to the girl of his choice, and that *both had been accepted*!—

"My father always exacted of me," wrote the imprudent John Atfield, "that I should not think of wedlock before my thirtieth year; and as he himself did not take a partner for life till his fiftieth, has certainly some right to make such conditions. I am therefore prepared to find him anything but pleased by the news of my opposition to his wishes; more particularly as Rose (a pretty name, is it not, Prissy? and belonging to one on whom it sits *so* becomingly!) has not a shilling in the world.—But what does that signify? Her frugal, self-denying habits are better than house and land; and her good housewifery will make her a safer wife for a poor man, like myself, than a rich heiress. But as you may suppose, my dear sister, I should not have ventured so far in the business, without the perfect approval of my employer, of whom Rose Hurstwell is a near relation; and I conceive that Mr. Egley's promise to raise my salary to three hundred a year on my marriage, is intended more by way of a portion to his kins*woman*, than as a reward for services which

he might obtain elsewhere far more to his advantage.

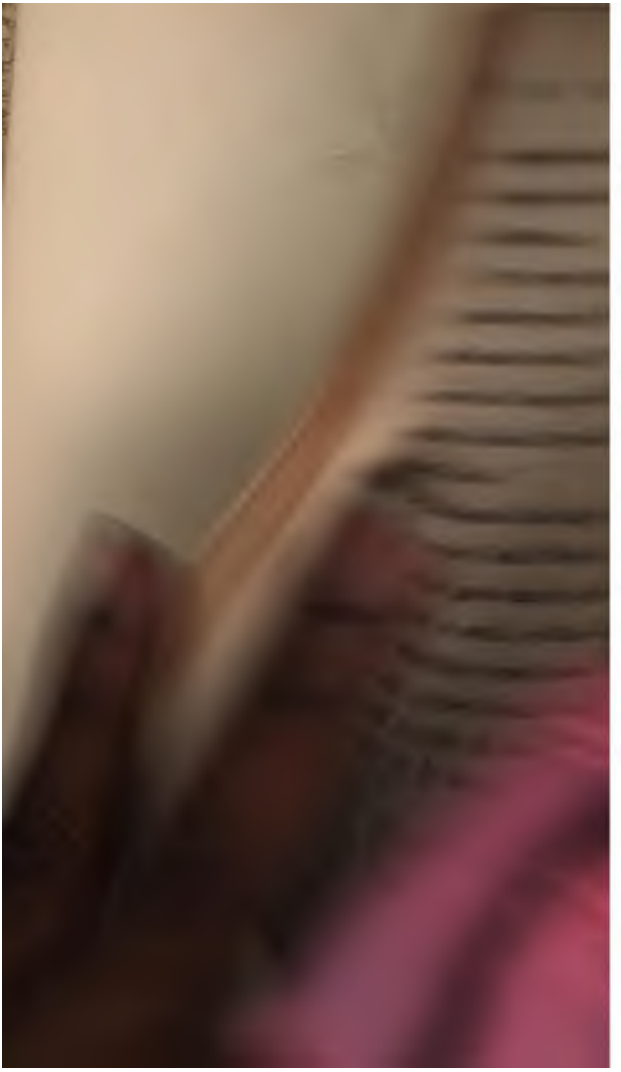
"In short, my dear girl, the thing is done,—that is, as far as can be without my father's actual consent; and I look to my little sister to smooth whatever difficulties may arise. My friend Mark, who, having business in the North, has kindly undertaken to deliver this in person, will break it to him, and explain the particulars of Rose's relationship, and the affection entertained for her by his family; and I shall be very much disappointed, Prisa, — *very* much disappointed *indeed*,—if you do not enable him to bring me back the assurance that my father sees things in a favourable light, and admits that nothing will make me so steady to business, as a good little wife and snug little home, to retire to after the toils of the day."

Whatever might be the old farmer's notions on the subject, it would have been strange indeed if a girl of Prissy's age had not entirely agreed *with her brother*; more particularly in favour of

a sister-in-law said to be as pretty as her name; with whom John Atfield went on to say that he had made acquaintance six years before, by saving her life at a Milbank water-party—viz., saving it as much as lives are usually "saved" on such occasions:—by dragging her out of the shallow water, in which their ill-manned wherry had capsized.

Still, though Priscilla saw everything in the brightest light as regarded her brother's projects, there was so much that was strange and startling in the mode in which they were transmitted to her knowledge, that she had some excuse for sitting up till midnight to ponder over them. She even heard, for the first time in her life, the old cuckoo clock in the kitchen, under her bedroom, repeat the two first small hours of the night; while she lay, wondering and wondering, and surmising and surmising, and, above all, earnestly hoping that Johnny's ambassador would open the matter discreetly to her father.

It was almost daylight, indeed, before her eye-



old gentleman to make an exception
and, for one Thursday in the year,
after learning that, from nine in the
two of the afternoon, he was to be left
of Prissy.

ours will not be a minute too long for
ver," said he, aside, to the young house-
though her father was satisfied that the
n related to the subject they had been
discussing,—the beauty of the environs,—
ly aware that her brother's friend
love affair between Rose Hurstwell

t not think of me, m Atfield,"
ed. "On your hall have
noon and evenin nd if your
r will take p ockney, and
me a few neigh d,
nt risking k by
rocks w pted m I
shall be in the
"A kes a cried

the old man, too pure of heart and exemplary of life, to perceive the smallest impropriety in such an arrangement.—"Prissy knows every bush and winding of the valley; where, even at noon-day, you 're sure of shade.—And she 'll take you down to the sands, lad, that is, if you 're fond o' the sea;—for as its Thursday, maybe you 'll get a sight o' the Manx steamer, on its way into Whitehaven."

The sight of a steamer afforded no great temptation to one whose habitual dwelling-place was Milbank. But he readily accepted the proposal, by way of setting his host's anxieties at rest.—It would be easier and pleasanter, he thought, to enter with his new acquaintance upon the discussion of her family affairs in the course of a country walk, than while sitting gravely opposite to her, in a room where there was nothing but needlework to break through the ceremoniousness of so recent an acquaintance.

And Prissy seemed to think so, too. For scarcely had her father taken his straw hat from the peg, and his oaken staff from the corner of the

parlour, and; after another shake-hands with the stranger, departed on his errand, when she hastened to prepare herself. Before Mark Egley had made the tour of the orchard, admiring the crop of cherries already ripe, and the still more abundant one of autumnal fruit in prospect, she was by his side, with Crony bounding before her.

"I will not ask you if you are a good walker," said she; "for the heat is so oppressive, that we shall be little inclined to exceed the limits of Dudbourne Dale.—At most, we can get upon the high ground to catch the sea-breeze; if, as I fear, we find that in the valley not a breath of air is stirring."

The traveller formally acquiesced. But the moment they passed the outer wicket, and he found himself treading once more the soft, green, elastic turf, he spoke out with his usual frankness.

"Johnny's letter has told you all?"—cried he.—"You *now* know, Miss Atfield, the motive of my visit?"—

"*I read it*, of course, before I slept."—

tell him, that Johnny's happiness depends upon the match ?"—

"Do you suppose a man of threescore years and fifteen will believe *us* in preference to the experience of his gray hairs ?"—rejoined Prissy, with a smile.—

"Experience—*experience !*"—retorted her companion. "What experience of three times threescore years, spent in this happy valley, can be applicable to a resident of busy, striving, thriving London ?—Your father cannot possibly understand against what allurements or what vices a young man is screened by a strong attachment to an amiable wife !—He cannot enter into the dangers from which Johnny will be extricated by an early marriage.—And secure, as your brother will be, of competence and comfort"—

"But *will* he be secure of competence and comfort?" interrupted Prissy, looking her companion ingenuously in the face.—"You talk of his having three hundred a year,—a great sum for him to earn, *certainly*,—and three times as much as maintains

our little household. But *we* subsist on the product of our land; whereas, in London, everything, they tell me, is so costly, and so many things are wanted of which I do not even know the name"—

"That you would have a man go moping through life, without a creditable roof over his head or a cheerful face to brighten it, lest he should be unable to provide luxuries for his family.—Fie, fie, fie, Miss Atfield!"—cried young Egley. "I had expected better thoughts in Dudbourne Dale!"—

"I am trying to express what I fear will be my father's opinion on the subject, rather than my own," said Priscilla, timidly.—"My father is a plain man,—ignorant, as you just now observed, of London customs; and one of his grand prejudices is against people being over-educated for their station in life. If you tell him half you have been telling *me* of Rose's talents and accomplishments"—

"Never fear!" interrupted Mark, in his turn.—"I will tell him only of her affection for his son, *which I hope will* be no disrecommendation.—I

with household comforts beyond those of any family in the country round."—

"You must have heard this from John!—I fancied John was more to be trusted!"—exclaimed Priscilla, with a deep blush.

"I won't deny that I have heard a great deal about you from your brother," replied Mark, keeping as close to her side as was compatible with the straitening of the path.—"'Twas only right that John should give me some insight into the character of the person who was to assist me in bringing round his father to consent to his marriage!"

As they sauntered on, engaged in pleasant chat or still pleasanter reverie, under shelter of the shrubby cliffs, Mark Egley had no great leisure to watch the sunbeams searching, as it were, into the stony recesses of the Dudbourne, shining through the slender stems of its tufted reeds and waterflowers, and the still slenderer ephemera suspended in the sunny gleam; marvellous creatures, with wings of gossamer, scales of burnished gold, and *eyes of green* enamel:—as fabulous, if described

to city experience, as gnome or sylph. The air was fragrant with the blossom of gorse and heather clothing the adjoining acclivities; and musical with that murmur of insect life and occasional trilling from the thickets, which animates the atmosphere of the wilderness as the busy hum of man does that of a populous city.

For some minutes, the young stranger felt conscious of far too exquisite a state of personal enjoyment, to bring to mind that he had a friend residing in Milbank, Westminster, whose happiness for life was dependent on his good offices in Cumberland.—

"After all," said he, suddenly bursting out of his reverie,—"why set about devising stratagems for disclosing what, between those who really love and confide in each other, cannot be too frankly told!—I will simply relate to Mr. Atfield what my grandfather intends to do for John in the event of his marriage, and leave it to his own good sense to say yes, or no, to the proposal."

"*Then it will* certainly say 'NO!'"—rejoined

Priscilla, untying her straw hat, and exposing her rich brown hair to the gentle breeze, which ever and anon swept sportively from the west, as though to remind the earth and her children, amid their tranquil confidence, that another and a mightier element was at hand.—"If the thing be proposed to him as a bargain, he will treat it as a bargain; calculating only whether his son will be a richer man at five-and-thirty, burdened with the support of six or eight children, out of his three hundred a year; or *then* to commence life, with the savings accumulated out of a smaller but unembarrassed income."

"But it is not *so* he must be allowed to view the question!" cried Mark.—"Though a church-warden, Mr. Atfield is open to other arguments than those which influence the board of a work-house!—You must tell him—yes, you *must really* tell him,"—continued he, fixing his eyes with involuntary admiration on the rich bands of hair which enframed the oval of her expressive face—"that *when two people* attached like Rose and your

brother, go through life hand in hand, from its opening to its close, like—like—like the ramparts of this quiet valley, which wind together, following each other's inclination with a settled purpose, serving to fortify, and hallow, and set apart the space between, so that the grass is greener, the flowers more beautiful, the song-birds blither, and happier, and more abundant, than in the space beyond,—it is not so much a question of profit and gain, as of beauty and holiness:—the wedded couple and Dudbourne Dale being alike fairer objects in the eye of Heaven, than the sands before us, or the barren moor above,—or such wild, useless, purportless, disconnected animals, as the humble servant who stands before you."—

Mark Egley concluded thus gaily, because beginning to fear, from the heightened colour and glistening eyes of Priscilla, that he was growing a trifle too sentimental. And such was probably the case; for a moment afterwards she tied her bonnet closer, and assumed a more formal gait.

It was owing, perhaps, to her new having tra-

versed the valley before with an intelligent companion, or indeed with any other than her worthy father, whose attention was absorbed in the condition of the pasture, and whose conversation consisted in grumbling at the rent exacted of him for it by the township of Duddonstone, that she found new beauty in the beetling crags which called forth the enthusiasm of her visitor,—the richly-tinted varieties of foliage,—and the deep blue of the germander enamelling the soil in such profusion, that it was, as Mark Egley observed, as though the sky were out of repair, and dropping blue fragments upon the ground.—

"And do you really wander in this beautiful valley, day after day, watching its changes of foliage and flowers?" said Mark, almost with a sigh; "while *I* am plodding over ledgers, stifling myself among furnaces, or stunning my ears with the thumping of steam-engines?"

"Not day after day.—Except to accompany my *father* to church on Sundays, I am sometimes *weeks without* passing the gate.—Insignificant as

you may think our household and garden, to maintain them in their present order, requires constant care.—But when at leisure, I have no greater delight than to keep my father company in an evening stroll towards the sea.—It is such a sudden and pleasant change to look out upon that boundless horizon, and listen to the mighty voice of the ocean, after long restriction to the closeness of the valley, and its petty chirpings and murmurs."—

"Lucky those who have the choice at hand!"—rejoined Mark. "To me, the sea-shore and the brook-side are alike replete with charm and novelty.—But whom have we here," cried he, as a rough-looking savage, who seemed afflicted with some sort of monstrous excrescence about the shoulders, appeared suddenly round the angle which Priscilla had announced as the last turn dividing them from the sea.—

"It is only Job, the fisherman!" replied Priscilla,—"in time, I am happy to see, to mend the bad dinner awaiting you on your return. When *the weather permits*, we are sure of fish two or

three days of the week;—the Dale path being the shortest way to Duddonstone from the cove near the lighthouse; where a couple of boats provide a subsistence for a few fishermen's families, harboured in a knot of hovels under the cliffs."—

"The shore is a bold one, then," inquired her companion, "since you talk of cliffs and a lighthouse?—I don't know why, unless that I am haunted by the ghost of the Cartmel sands,—but I fancied it a level coast."—

"There are some dangerous reefs of rock, half-a-mile up the shore towards Ravenglass, concerning which we have sad legends in the country of ship wreck and destruction; and so far, the shore is such as the cliffs overhead might prepare you to expect," said Priscilla, glancing upwards to the gray pinnacles clearly defined against the pure blue sky.—"It was the number of dreadful casualties on our coast, which determined the Admiralty, about ten years ago, (just about the time my father settled in *Dudbourne Dale,)* to erect a lighthouse."

"*And have we time* to reach the spot?" inquired

Mark, — to whose city-bound notions, the scene of several frightful wrecks was a point of attraction.

"Certainly!—It is but ten minutes' walk beyond the estuary. I seldom attempt it alone. The fisher-people are a disagreeable race, and the man at the lighthouse is a surly recluse; so that, having no interest in that direction, my father and I generally turn southward."

Mark Egley had an excellent opportunity at that moment to judge of the fisher-people; for the plodding figure, wearing loose canvas trousers tucked into a pair of unaccountable boots, and a patched blue jacket on his shoulders, was near enough to make it apparent that the excrescence, so unseemly at a distance, was neither more nor less than a fish-basket; which, on being hailed by Priscilla with a cheerful "good-day," he insisted on unbuckling, to exhibit his stock.

"Rayther deal with the young missus," he said, "*than with* the old hag, Ruth; who bargained and *haggled* as if fish was to be had for dipping your

hand into the Dudbourne, without risk of life or limb, or cost of cordage."

And though Priscilla, untempted by his assurance that his soles and whitings had been alive and fresh in the water an hour before, would fain have declined the housewifely office of choosing her fish before her guest, the green turf was covered in a moment with the glittering scales of the contents of Job's basket; while the astonishment of old Crony was not a little excited by two or three blue lobsters making clumsy efforts at escape:—a scene highly amusing to the Londoner, who had never before seen such objects out of a fishmonger's leaden tray.—

"The tide is coming in, then, Job?" inquired Miss Atfield, after making her selection.

".Cooming in!" replied the fisherman,—a man so meek that his name seemed to have been given him by way of byword; and so well drilled by a termagant wife, that his voice was a mere echo.

"Yet you seem to have passed the brook dry-*shod?" persisted* Priscilla.

"Dryshood!" repeated Job, who, having placed at the top of his basket the fish chosen by his customer, stood waiting for Mark Egley's assistance to heave his burden upon his shoulder.

"We need not in short put down stepping-stones here for crossing the Dudbourne?"

"Ye needn't put doon stepping-stones here for crossing the Doodbourne," responded the precise Job; and having received the aid he needed, and nodded his thanks, the taciturn fisherman plodded on his way again, as uncouthly as before.

"At low water," observed Prissy, as soon as he was out of hearing, "it is easy to cross the estuary, by taking up a few stones on the beach, and throwing them down before you as you go.—But, when the tide is in, it is necessary to cross the brook hereabouts, and keep close under the opposite cliffs till you reach the shore;—the turf being treacherous and swampy, and the water too strong to ford."

"Then, for precaution sake, as your friend so-*sparing of his* words has given us but scanty information, supposing we make sure of our footing

said Mark.—And before Priscilla could express her dissent, she found herself quietly lifted by the waist, and placed high and dry on the opposite marge.

A little surprised, Priscilla laughed off her confusion by assuring him that a country life rendered her too great an adept in brook-fording and gate-climbing, to render assistance necessary; and a moment afterwards, on issuing from the narrow gorge in which they and the mountain-stream had been enclosed, they came full upon that waste of waters which, of all the monitors of nature's bestowing, brings human beings the most readily and completely to a sense of their insignificance. At that minute, the sea before them was as blue as the summer sky over their heads; varied only by white specks in the distance,—the sails of merchant-vessels, announcing the littleness of the best efforts of mankind to contend with the vastness of the waves which Britannia is said to rule.

A sense of relief, produced by emerging from the stagnant air of the valley into the breezy and balmy *atmosphere of that* boundless space, rendered them

silent for a time, as they stood watching the gradual advance of the tide, till, from the level sand over which the water skimmed so smoothly, it rose with a foamy fringe upon the rough shingle, into which, instead of receding, it seemed to disappear.

"How beautiful and how refreshing!" said Mark, in an under tone totally different from the ringing and joyous accents in which he had been joking and conversing in the valley, as he leisurely surveyed the coast, with its headlands receding faintly in the distance.

"If my father were here," said Priscilla, "he could tell you where to look out for the Welsh coast, and where for the Isle of Man."

"I care little for distant objects," was his rejoinder.—"The blue sky, and blue sea, suffice." And a glance into his companion's face at that moment, seemed to imply that there was another near object included in the essentials to his happiness, which discretion forbad him to name.—

Priscilla was the first to propose moving onward to *the lighthouse*.—"If you wish to see it, we

must be stirring," said she,—"or my father may be anxious at not finding us, on his return. Not, however," she continued, as soon as they were again in motion, "that I can answer for your admittance.—Master Francis, the lighthouse-keeper, keeps himself close shut up within his little tower,—with no companion, or any one to assist or serve him, but Job's wife, lame Moggy, the greatest scold in the neighbourhood.—The people hereabouts entertain, in fact, a sort of awe of the person capable of breaking the spirit of Moggy, and living from year's end to year's end, looking out upon the great deep, with no companion but his own thoughts."—

"An old man, of course?" said Mark. "Young people are too restless for such confinement!"

"I conclude so.—I remember hearing Job say it was not above once a week, or so, his gray head was seen in the enclosure he has fenced off round the tower, and converted into such a garden as the sea-breezes will allow."—

"Even the loneliest recluse, you see, finds pleasure *in something!*"—observed Mark.

"My father being at the cove a few weeks after his arrival," resumed Priscilla, "and fancying it was for his own supply he had dug and trenched the ground, sent him by Job, by way of neighbourly kindness, a basket of fruit and vegetables."—

"An acceptable gift,—to one living on the edge of a moor, a couple of hundred feet above the level of the sea!"—

"On the contrary,—within two hours after it left our house, the basket was returned!—We afterwards found that Job had been paid to bring it back; that no time might be lost in signifying Master Francis's churlish determination to receive no favours from strangers."

"Neighbours *ought* not to be strangers!" retorted Mark.—

"So my father thinks,—because so the Bible teaches;—and the pride and moroseness shown in the rejection of his advances, inspired him with a bad opinion of the new-comer. But from that day to *this*, *nothing* farther has passed between

us; our ambassador being, as you have seen, as uncommunicative as Master Francis could wish."—

"All you tell me doubles my desire to get a sight of the lighthouse!"—cried Mark.—"I never chanced to stumble on a real right-down living misanthrope."—

"And do you wish it?—Ten to one he will affront you!"—

"I am not afraid.—The proverb tells us the devil is painted blacker than he *is*.—How do we know but something in Job's bearish mode of executing your father's commission, may have caused the basket to be sent back?"—

"At all events," said Priscilla, "I am afraid I cannot offer to accompany you, if you want to obtain a sight of the interior of the lighthouse.—My father entertains such a grudge against our ungracious neighbour, that he would be displeased at my attempting to cross his threshold.—I and Crony will rest in Moggy's hut, to await your return."—

"*Between* a brute and a scold, you have a sorry

choice," retorted Mark, with a laugh.—"The regret of leaving you to such shelter would determine me, indeed, to renounce my project, were you not likely to attribute my change of mind to dread of being hugged by the bear you have been describing."

"On the contrary, my womanly curiosity inclines me to wish you *would* persevere," rejoined Priscilla. —"I should like to obtain, through you, some insight into the mysteries of the enchanted tower."—

"Here we are, then!" said Mark, as they reached the point where the shelving rocks, receding into the shore, formed a sort of natural cove, or haven, about a couple of hundred feet from the spot where the lighthouse, proudly predominating over the cliffs, announced to the unwary mariner that the black, unshapely masses, which at low tide might be mistaken for a shoal of marine monsters lying helpless on the sand, constituted, at high water, a bottom of sunken rocks, of the most dangerous description, against which many a gallant vessel had gone to pieces.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was something so marine in the aspect of the habitations abutting on the cliffs affording shelter to the little cove, that they seemed as exactly adapted to their inhabitants, as an oyster-shell to its oyster!—Masses of tangled sea-weed, thrown on the shingle by the tide, and gathered up to burn for ashes,—to say nothing of spars, sails, and nets stretched to dry in the sun,—impregnated the air with saline particles and so strong a savour of poor Job's vocation, that, as Mark Egley observed to his companion on approaching the spot, one expected to see mermaids and prawns emerge from those shell-encrusted dwellings, instead of women and children.—

"Nothing the least like a mermaid, however!" *added he,* as Lame Moggy hobbled to the door-post,

and stood staring at them with one hand clutched into the elf-locks of an urchin, who was hanging to her tarpaulin apron.—"I am much mistaken, if yonder water-kelpie had ever either comb or looking-glass in her hand!"—

His indignation at the incivility with which Moggy lent a grudging ear to Priscilla's explanation of their errand, (interrupting her every now and then by cries to the elder of her offspring, who were busy, either at work or play, under cover of a lean-to adjoining the hovel,—the roof being composed of an old broken boat, the rusty tar of which was sending forth in the sun a pungent vapour,)—at length so mastered his patience, that he would not hear of being obliged to her.

Instead, however, of listening to his protestations that he had lost all inclination for visiting the light-house,—that if they loitered longer they should be too late for Farmer Atfield's dinner-hour,—Priscilla, by addressing herself to the vulnerable point of Moggy's character, mollified as by a charm her *ungracious demeanour*. An allusion to their

encounter with Job, their liberal bargain, and a request that the best fish brought in by the coble should be set apart for her for some days to come, decided the thrifty housewife to propitiate her generous customer.

"A young man from Loon'on a-wanting to see the light'us'?" she now inquired, shoving aside a shoal of little minnows smelling of seaweed, who, at the sight of strangers, gathered for protection round their parent triton:—"and whoy not?—Plenty's the foolks as coom holiday-making from Bootle and Dood'nst'n, oy, and down Oolpha awa', for a dip i' the saut water, and a look at ta loights"—

And on Priscilla's expressing a wish that Moggy would undertake the introduction of her companion, receiving proper remuneration for her trouble, the grumblings and mutterings with which she inquired, "who was to moind ta bairns?" were far more easily appeased than might have been expected from the scolding wife of the meek Job.—

Moggy even proceeded to hint, that for a sufficient "*con-sideration*," her neighbour of the adjoin-

ing hut would undertake, during her absence, the care of the children, (whom Priscilla had promised to keep out of mischief,) in case the young lady should wish to enjoy the fine sea-view commanded from the lighthouse. The day was so clear, that Moggy did not scruple to promise them a sight of Scotland, Ireland, England, and Wales, as from the top of Skiddaw;—to say nothing of a peep into Dudbourne Dale, and a distant view of the Isle of Man.—No keeper of an itinerant telescope or camera-obscura, could be more comprehensive in his program.—

"No need to say nought afore Maister Frawncis o' whar y're coomed fro', nor whar y're gooing to," —added Moggy.—"All 's one to him, so 's he 's na questioned nor mislested."—

"The ungracious way in which he behaved to my father," replied Priscilla, "is quite sufficient to deter me from incurring an obligation to him."—

"Y'r feyther—y'r feyther!" retorted Moggy, whose boorishness had perhaps gained a shade in *roughness from daily* communication with the

recluse,—"who knows, lass, but y'r feyther may ha' been the furst to bleame?—Y'r feyther 's a haird mon, Miss Atfield, as the puir foolk know to their coost.—H's'ever, keep a still toongue in y'r head, muse, and ye 'll pass for ane o' the Bootle pleasurers, and noon the wiser!"—

"*Do* come with me,—do *pray* come with me!—I enjoy and understand nothing I am sent to visit alone!" pleaded Mark; and on learning, in reply, that his companion had long experienced considerable curiosity concerning the lighthouse, and was only prevented complying with his entreaties by dread of displeasing her father, he undertook, with sanguine self-reliance, to explain to Farmer Atfield that the arrangement was entirely of his making, and that he had refused to leave his fair guide alone amidst a horde of unruly brats and their half-savage mother.—

Still Priscilla hesitated. Nor was it till Moggy assured them she had "left Maister Frawncis only half-an-hoor abye, a' work in his garden;" and that *she would obtain* his sanction as they passed through

the enclosure, and herself undertake the office of marshalling them to the lantern, as she had done many a curious visitant before, that, ceding to a series of whispers from Mark Egley, the purport of which was Greek to Moggy and not particularly clear to herself, she followed the guidance of the "water-kelpie" (as suddenly converted to Christianity as the king of the Goths, by a half-crown slipped into her horny hand by the "Loon'oner,") up a steep ascent, so roughly shaped in the craggy cliffs, that she was half inclined to agree in Moggy's suggestion, that "foolks who cam' clombing thereawa'" should be shod, like herself, with a pair of Cumbrian brogues.—

By the aid of frequent breathing-pauses, firm clingings to the jutting rock, and occasional support from Mark who followed close in the rear, she at length attained the summit of the cliffs; out of a grassy mound of which arose the lighthouse,—apparently a stony growth of the rocks below.—

A burst of admiration avouched the delight with which *Priscilla hailed* the glorious expanse that lay

before her, basking in the sun; and while she and her companion stood enjoying the imposing scene, their guide hobbled off to the enclosure hedged off with quickset, in the rear of the lighthouse; one half of which consisted of an ill-cultivated, ill-thriving garden-patch; and the other of a rough grass plot, on which were tethered a goat and her kid.—

It was to the former portion, in which an aged man, arrayed in a sailor's dress, was trenching the ground as earnestly as though his subsistence depended upon the product, that Moggy directed her limping steps; and the permission for which she applied was so readily and listlessly granted by Master Francis, that, had Mark and Priscilla been watching his movements, instead of giving way to the feelings arising from the survey of the glorious scene before them, they would have perceived that the old man did not so much as raise his head from the spade over which he was leaning, for a glance at the applicants. So instantaneous, indeed, was his acquiescence, as almost to give rise to the suspicion that the shrewish temper which had drilled

poor Job into an automaton, had not been altogether ineffective elsewhere.

"Y're free to coom and gang, yoong folks!" was Moggy's terse announcement of the success of her mission; on which, as if suddenly relieved from restraint, Mark Egley faced towards the tower, and bestowed a due tribute of applause upon the boldness of its outline, which represented something between the martello tower of our southern coast, and the lighthouse of the olden time. — One of the first erected on the principle of a revolving light, its machinery was of a more cumbrous nature than any now in use;—the building being so constructed as to afford a roof and shelter to the guardian of the lighthouse.

Already, Priscilla Atfield had explained to her companion, with an exulting countenance, that since the establishment of Duddon lighthouse, and the life-boat laid up in the cove, not a wreck had occurred on that part of the coast,—formerly proverbial for its casualties;—and as Master Francis had been, from the first, its sole overseer and effici-

ator, subject only to annual visits from the inspector of the harbour at Whitehaven, some credit was due to his vigilance.—

"Small thanks to him for that!" observed Mark to Priscilla, as they followed the hobbling ascent of old Moggy, up the winding staircase, which daily practice rendered more familiar than easy.—"What has he got, pray, to distract his thoughts from plying his windlass, trimming his lantern, or greasing his machinery?—The old fellow's goats and garden do not seem of so interesting a quality as to divert a man from the discharge of his duties."—

A reproof from Moggy reminded them that sluggishness and drink are as perilous to the poor as vices of fairer aspect to the rich; or as, to use her own words, "the scran o' rocks down yon, fro' which the light'us,—(praise be to the Lord's and the Queen's goodness!) had rescued the lives of them as go down to the sea in ships."—And by the time she had delivered herself of her lesson, they had wound their way past the little cell-like *chamber inhabited* by Master Francis, to the iron

door, secured with a bar and staple, that opened into the lantern;—"An ill perch," Moggy informed them, "to roost on, o' blusterous nights."—

Surprised to find that what at a distance appeared a lantern of little more than ordinary proportions, was a chamber in which she could stand upright, and where the reflector, so effective as a beacon of safety to seafarers, was dim with saline exhalations, Priscilla was beginning to doubt whether the sea-view obtained were sufficiently superior to that afforded by the cliffs below, to compensate for the tediousness of the ascent and the unpleasant vapours of the place, which, hermetically sealed, smelt of the lamp like a Cambridge professor.—

"Boide 'till y've had a look through Maister Frawncis's long spy-glass"—cried Moggy, "and ye'll no' be long crying down the grondness o' the view."

And, to their surprise, they found that the permission granted extended even to the habitation of the keeper.—Priscilla, indeed, remonstrated against such an invasion of his privacy.—But the old

woman assured her she was the first visitor who had proved so scrupulous; and Mark, in high spirits, and full of curiosity to know what might be the domestic comforts of a Robinson Crusoe established more than a hundred feet above the level of the earth, readily accepted the offer.—

At the first glance, there was nothing in the little chamber rounded at one end by the shaping of the tower, into which they were admitted by Moggy, to distinguish it from the cabin of a ship of small tonnage.—But as soon as the eye got accustomed to the twilight afforded by its arrow-slit of a window, there was something in the neat hammock and matted floor, which, considering the untidiness of Moggy's personal habits, did credit to her care.—Besides the hammock and a wooden chair and table, the furniture consisted of a handsome telescope, upon its stand, marked as the property of the Admiralty.

But in spite of Moggy's entreaties that they would take a look at the Isle of Man through the spy-glass, neither Prissy nor Mark felt inclined to

meddle with the costly instrument: the former being absorbed in reflections arising from the discovery that the well-worn book, the only one in the room, lying on the table, was a school-boy's copy of the New Testament; and that a small black frame, appended to the wall, contained, in lieu of the print or picture she expected, an inscription, in clerkly text, of that foundation-precept of Christian love—"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us!"—

"Not exactly what one might have expected in the den of such a churl as Master Francis!" observed Mark, in a low tone, to the ruminative girl. —Then, addressing the old woman, he inquired whether the cell in which they were standing comprised the whole habitable portion of the lighthouse; and was comforted to find there were two lower stories,—one containing the linen-press, books, and clothes of the recluse,—while the ground-floor, which he inhabited in winter-time, was furnished with a stove.

"I was beginning to feel a little restless on the

no effort to control his wrath.—But *she* was too discreet to indulge in fruitless excuses.—*Her* first idea was to be of use.—

"I am afraid, Master Francis," said she, "that the little creature's leg is broken.—It is unable to stand."—

On which hint, the limb was carefully examined by its indignant master, and her judgment confirmed.—

"If you would trust me to bind it up," said she, calmly,—"I am used to such accidents at my father's farm; and can undertake that in a few days it will be cured."—

At the first sound of her gentle voice, the surly lighthouse-keeper raised his eyes from the wounded kid, and fixed them on her face. But at this offer of her services, made in so kindly a manner, he lifted the cap from his gray hairs, and thanked her gratefully.—"His rough hands," he said, "were not equal to the task she had undertaken"—

"And which belongs to those who are the cause *of the misfortune*," added Priscilla.—Then, address-

ing Mark, she begged him to carry back to the cove the offender she was about to release; and turning a deaf ear to his remonstrances against leaving her alone in a strange place, closed the wicket upon him and Crony, who still showed his teeth like an animal baulked of his prey.—While returning towards Master Francis and the victim, she tore into strips the handkerchief which had served her dog as a cord; and produced from her pocket that obsolete indispensable of female industry, a housewife.

As she was about to raise the wounded kid from the ground, Master Francis held her arm.—Though tethered, the goat was sufficiently at liberty to be dangerous to a stranger attempting to remove her offspring. But having himself taken it into his arms, he led the way to a wooden bench, placed under the shade of the hawthorn-hedge and light-house; and held it while Priscilla, with a firm but careful hand, which avouched at once experience and humanity, bound the broken limb tightly in the *linen bandage*; and having sewed it over with

skill and expedition, desired that it might be kept moistened with cold water.—The soothing manner in which she handled and cheered her little dumb patient during the operation, opened a way straight to the heart of its master.—

"You must forgive me, young lady," said he, "for having been a bit rough at first, on finding this helpless thing bleeding on the grass.—A man who leads the lonesome life that I do, is apt to make too much a friend of any dumb animal that keeps him company; and, for years, my goat has been my sole companion."—

Priscilla longed to rejoin—"Because such is your pleasure,"— and to renew the friendly overtures formerly made by Dudbourne Dale.—But aware that, of late, her father's feelings towards their neighbour had become anything but favourable, she dared not hazard an advance.

"I am grieved that my dog should have been the cause of molesting her," rejoined she, with an embarrassed blush, on finding the eyes of the old man *perusing every* lineament of her face. "Had

I thought of visiting the lighthouse on quitting home, I should have left him behind."—

An expression of his hopes that she had fully gratified her curiosity, or if not, that she would return at some future time, when he would make it his pleasure to show her over every part of it and explain the various points of view it commanded, afforded her some satisfaction, as a proof that Crony's delinquency was forgiven. Though it would have been hard, indeed, if the owner of such a table of the law as she had found suspended in Master Francis's bedroom, had proved a man of implacable resentments!—

She was already beginning to thank him, and demur about at once accepting his offer, when Mark, heated by the speed he had used in hastening to rejoin her, dashed through the gate, as though he expected to find her scattered limbs strewed around the lion's den. It needed not for him to remind her, as she had previously reminded himself, that her father's dinner-hour was two, and that they *must not be loitering*.

After a few gracious words of farewell, therefore, and the expression of a hope that the speedy recovery of the wounded animal might do credit to her surgery, the young couple prepared to depart. They had already reached the wicket, when the gruff voice of Master Francis, rendered still hoarser by some inward struggle, caused Priscilla to turn round.

"Shake hands before you cross my threshold!"—said he. "Maybe I shall never see your young face again. But 'tis one there is a pleasure in having looked upon!"—

And the glistening aspect of his eyes, as he fixed them with a yearning and paternal look upon her features, attested the sincerity of his words.

Another minute, and she was picking her way down the rough stairs of the cliff; thankful to accept the hand of Mark Egley, who descended backward before her, to sustain her unsteady footing.—

"Custom is everything!" said Prissy.—"The *oor old lame fish*erwoman makes far less fuss in

accomplishing this feat than I in the full vigour of health."—

And Moggy, who was waiting for them at the foot of the cliffs, to bid them thank their stars the "Maister" had taken so peacefully the misdemeanours of Crony, seeing that he was "a turrable mon when his bluid was oop," fully confirmed the supposition.— She admitted having to climb to the lighthouse "ma' be, sax times i' the day;" and except in one of the hard frosts so rare on the seacoast, without fear of mischance.—

An additional gratuity bestowed for the care of the delinquent Crony, who jumped nearly out of his skin and quite to the waist of his mistress, for joy at his release, put the old woman more than ever in conceit with visitors of an order so rare to her experience. But that her cabin contained only a stale barley loaf, some whitings' heads, and a crock of brackish water, fain would she have given vent to her hospitable feelings by inviting them in.—

"Send me word by Job how the poor kid is *getting on,*" said Priscilla, at parting from him

Moggy; who, like her patron of the lighthouse, and the month of March, had begun like a lion and ended like a lamb.—"But say nothing to Master Francis of us. As he is not disposed to be on friendly terms with my father, better not mention my name."—

The old woman promised; and kept screeching out a reiteration of her promise, so long as their uneven path along the shingle kept them in sight.

They had turned into the valley,—they had even passed the angle which served to shut out the sea, and traversed the brook on the old stepping-stones, —before Priscilla could throw off the painful impression produced by the strange emotion of the solitary old man.—

"It is from no want of natural feeling, you see, that he keeps his fellow-creatures at bay!" said she, in reply to the rallying of her companion upon her reverie.—

"He may have met with severe trouble," observed Mark, doubtingly.—

"*Trouble inclines me* to seek company and kindly

words, for consolation," rejoined Priscilla. But on such points, few people feel alike.—My father, I believe, came from a distant part of the country to settle at Duddonstone, only from having met with reverses which made his native place distasteful to him."—

"Yes — from Skipton-in-Craven," interposed Mark, "where he and my grandfather were born and bred."—

"And, later in life," added Priscilla, "when distracted at my poor mother's death, he broke up his housekeeping at Duddonstone and came to live in this out-of-the-way spot, with not so much as a dalesman's hut within a mile of him,—as if satisfied to be alone with his sorrows."—

"I should sincerely congratulate our new friend, Master Francis, on being alone with *his*," rejoined Mark, to divert her from the gloomy strain into which she was falling :—"for I would as soon have an old crow for my familiar spirit as lame Moggy!"

"But if she be serviceable, — faithful, — attached?"—

"I would *still* rather look out for some one to render me service and fidelity who did not make it desirable to close my eyes and hold my breath while giving my orders.—The old beldame wants only fins to be a fish!"—

"I was afraid you were going to say a shark,—a name which, if half the tales told in the neighbourhood of her ferocity to poor Job be true, would not be ill-bestowed.—But instead of abusing her just after she has rendered us service, advise me, Mr. Egley, what I shall do about breaking to my father our unlucky visit to the lighthouse."

"Surely you are not afraid he will resent it?"—

"Not if all had chanced as I fancied it would; and we had passed for Duddonstone strangers, and attracted no notice from Master Francis.—But when my father finds that I have actually made acquaintance with a man against whom he has conceived so strong a prejudice—"

"You must endeavour to remove the prejudice—*it is all I can suggest*!—You must tell him how

forgivingly the old man put up with the aggressions of my friend Crony."—

"At any other time," interrupted Priscilla, "the whole affair would be known to my father before I had been five minutes in the house.—But forewarned of his dislike to the stranger, I tremble at the thoughts of harassing him just as you are about to make your disclosures about poor John. —Temper is a sad tyrant over us all."—

"Not over *you*, I am certain!" remarked young Egley—

"And many people judge clearly, and decide kindly, so long as their's is unruffled," pursued Priscilla, "who, the moment they are out of humour, find it as impossible to receive any fair impression, as water whose surface is rippled, to render back a clear reflection."—

"Then, by Jove, we must not ripple the surface to-day, by throwing stones into the stream!" cried Mark: "for everything depends, for your brother, on my obtaining a fair and dispassionate hearing.— It *is surely not* worth while to provoke Mr. Athfield's

displeasure by volunteering the information that we have been treading forbidden ground, when angry feelings might provoke some angry word, never, *never*, to be recalled!"—

The natural integrity of Priscilla's character was about to find vent in remonstrance against anything resembling duplicity or deceit; when lo! startled by the sudden barking of Crony, who was bounding on before, she raised her eyes to find the object of their discussion advancing rapidly towards them.—Mark had only time to ascertain, by a furtive glance at his watch, that it was nearer three o'clock than two, to account for the contraction of the farmer's brow, which, even at a distance, was sufficiently apparent.—

Peevish, for want of his dinner, and urged by the impatience of Ruth (who was waiting the signal of their arrival, to place the soles in her fryingpan,) though weary from a morning of untoward business, Farmer Atfield had come in quest of the truants!—

CHAPTER V.

THE old gentleman's displeasure did not long hold out against the cheerful greeting of his guest; who had so much to say concerning the pleasantness of his walk, and the beauties of the scenery they had been exploring, that the farmer forgave him not only his want of punctuality, but his having omitted to note the number and fine condition of the cattle pastured in Dudborne Dale.

Prompt atonement, moreover, was made by Priscilla for her delay, in the celerity with which she changed her dress and re-braided her hair while dinner was placed on table. And by the time old Atfield had appeased his temper, and opened one of the bottles of fine old cider he had brought forth from his famous cellar in the rock, he was disposed to pledge as hearty a health to his visitor,

as though they had been seated at table precisely as the clock struck two.

Viewed by daylight, his handsome face somewhat more coloured than usual by confronting the July sun upon the open cliffs, Mark Egley presented so strong a resemblance to his grandfather, as Atfield had parted from him at Skipton half a century before, that scarcely was the cloth off the table, when the farmer extended his hand to his guest with the gripe of a blacksmith's vice, and eyes almost as tearful as those with which the recluse of the lighthouse had gazed upon Priscilla.—

"As handsome a stripling as ever stepped in shoe-leather, was my friend James!" cried the farmer, watching the creaming of his cider, as he prepared to do justice to his toast: "But you're as like him, lad, as one Windsor bean to another;—except that you 're a thought taller and more upright, and a deal clearer of complexion."—

In return for such straightforward compliments, (the less distasteful, perhaps, from being *in presence* of Priscilla,) Mark Egley could

do no less, after drinking to his grandfather's health, than applaud the beauty of the dessert.

"Ay, lad!—tis'nt often you'll find such fruit within reach of the seabreezes!" said the farmer. "With ne'er a wall worth speaking of but such as Prissy's taken possession of for her honeysuckles,—peaches, or nectarines, I don't pretend to; and apricots don't thrive even so far inland as Dudd'n-st'n. But as for bush-fruit, or orchard-fruit, I back myself again Ulpha Park and all its gardeners."—

"My grandfather has some famous forcing-houses at Milbank," observed Mark. "He built them, I fancy, as a spec.; and, for some years, made them answer. But as soon as I grew old enough to distinguish a bunch of Hamburgh grapes from a Providence pine, I persuaded him that fruit good enough to sell, was twice as good to eat; and between Johnny's inroads and mine, only a few guineas' worth finds its way to Covent Garden."

Priscilla, who understood this vaunt precisely as it was meant, as a pretext for the introduction of

her brother's name, nodded approvingly to young Egley. But already, her father had resumed the thread of his discourse.—

"I'm a bit out of zest for talking about fruit or gardens to-day!" said he. "I've had such a plague of a morning, thanks to such matters, that I could find it in my heart to root up every strawberry-bed yonder,—though they're counted the finest i' the parish."—

"A plague of a morning brought about by *a garden*, father?"—exclaimed Priscilla, a little surprised.—

"Such a blow-up at our vestry-meeting," resumed the farmer, addressing Mark, "as I never expected to witness, unless maybe at a bull-bait!—You 're to know, lad, that Dudd'nst'n parish being a vicarage, the large tithes go to the lord o' the manor, and the small 'uns to the parson:—whose family being large, and his gains smallish, he 's not circumstanced to pass over whatever rights he can make good."—

"*And why* should he?" cried Mark.—"Whether

in trade or profession, the labourer is worthy of his hire."

"Ay, to be sure!"—reiterated the churchwarden, authoritatively thumping the shining oaken table. "That 's just what I said myself.—Yet, there 's a fellow, you 're to know, in these parts,—a fellow taking government pay, and feeding on bread kneaded out o' the pockets o' the people, who not only refuses to pay tithe for his garden, on plea that 'tis a waste bit, reclaimed by his own industry for his own 'special use and pleasure,—but takes on himself to insult the paroch'al officer by whom payment is claimed, and threatens to fling him uvver his hedge, if he shows his nose again on the premises!"—

Priscilla turned red for a moment, and then as pale as ashes; convinced, from the allusion to government pay and her father's unusual exasperation, that the insubordinate to whom he alluded was no other than Master Francis!—A sad augury for their intended announcement!—

"*I 'm afraid, Mr.* Atfield, the land is still to be

discovered by circumnavigators or arctic expeditions," rejoined Mark, as gravely as he could, "where a taxgatherer is ever otherwise received than as Reynard is welcomed to the hen-roost. People will pay their butcher, their baker, their candlestick-maker, without a wry face; but it is hard work to wring a man's taxes out of his pocket!"

"But how 's the government to be carried on, sir—how 's ever the government to be carried on," cried the farmer, (growing a little redder about the gills, as the bumper of cider he had filled to "Queen and Constitoosh'n" after the cloth was removed, brought the "eloquent blood" to his sunburned cheeks, and eloquent words to his mouth,) "if nobody will pay the piper for keepin' up the law o' the land, and the doctrines o' the church?—Law and gospel don't grow by the wayside, young gentl'man, like docks and thistles; and him as won't render to Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's, hasn't no right to expect what things is his own will be *—t his own, by* the help o' Cæsar's centooriona."

"I trust, my dear Mr. Atfield," cried Mark, too high in spirits to take due heed that he offended not with his tongue,—"you have no thoughts of robbing this radical rascal's orchard, as a punishment for his lawlessness?"—

The farmer looked hard at him, to make sure that nothing was intended but a harmless joke; and, satisfied on that point by Mark Egley's open smile, resumed his anathema.—

"From first of his coming here, I knew the fellow was a churl and a do-no-good!" cried he.—"The man who thrusts aside the hand of a fellow-creatur' extended cord'ally tow'rds him, is like enow to have blood or dirt on his own!"—

"Nay, nay, Master Atfield,—we mustn't judge *quite* so hardly!" remonstrated Mark.—

"One can't help the judgments GOD ALMIGHTY puts into one's mind!" exclaimed the farmer.—"And so convicted do I feel that this here man, who denies the church her own, and a neighbour the pleasure o' doing him service, is some skulking vagabond, *that* were a warrant out in the neighb'r-

hood for a suspected rogue, name unknown, I sh'ud say at once to the constable—Sarch first at the lighth'us'!"—

"My dear father," cried Priscilla, who had been casting anxious glances towards Mark Egley, in hopes of encouragement to commence her explanations, "I have perhaps hesitated too long about acquainting you with something which, I fear, will greatly displease you.—But what you have just said determines me, in justice to others, to unburden my mind.—You must not be *very* angry!—Mr. Egley will tell you that the act I am about to confess was quite unpremeditated"—

"The act you are about to confess!" reiterated the old man, alarmed at so strong an expression.—

"When we set off on our walk this morning," resumed his daughter, "all I thought of was to show our London guest that, however beautiful the inland scenery hereabouts, we had a noble sea-view within reach"—

"And when I insisted upon visiting the light-*house,*" *interposed* Mark, eager to relieve her of

some portion of her responsibility,—"your daughter assured me, sir, that it was impossible;—that you had cause to complain of the lighthouse-keeper, and would be displeased if we entered his premises."

"In spite o' which you *did* enter them?"—inquired the old man, sternly.

"It appeared so unlikely that the person in question would surmise the name of his visitors," persisted Mark, "that when, on reaching the cove, one of the fishermen's wives offered to conduct us over the place, I argued so strongly against Miss Atfield's reluctance, as to induce her to bear me company."—

The farmer had no need to utter an indignant comment.—On hearing a voice so reproachful from the lips of her father, tears had already gushed into Priscilla's eyes.

"The mere curiosity of seeing how a lantern was made to turn round a-top of a tower!"—ejaculated the old man—as if arguing with himself. "A fine temptation truly, to break a *fond father's* commandment!"—

to-night, father," said she, "but that, as you seem so set against this stranger, it is but right you should know, that while we were on sufferance upon his premises, my brother's dog attacked a harmless pet of his, and wounded it severely. But so far from resenting the injury, Master Francis was as thankful to me for bandaging up the leg of his kid, as though the offence were not of our committing."

"Our dog break the leg of an animal belonging to *him*?" said the farmer, bitterly annoyed at finding himself innocently in the wrong.—

"And I promise you, dear sir," replied Mark, "that few men would have taken the thing so mildly as *he* did.—In Master Francis's retreat, however, we had already found a tablet inculcating the Divine precept of forgiveness of injuries; and, fortunately, the Christian practised what he preached."

To this hint ensued a silence of some minutes' duration.—Farmer Atfield, who was not only by *nature a pious* man, but fancied himself bound, as

Churchwarden, to exhibit a double share of submission to scriptural precepts, felt rebuked by so apt an application of gospel law.—Had Priscilla's disobedience regarded any person breathing, or thing extant, but the lighthouse and its guardian, he would not have hesitated to bid her cheer up, for that her fault was forgiven. As it was, the act of pardon required a struggle.—It was not till she had taken his hard weather-beaten hand, and again repeated, "Father—forgive me!" that he hugged her to his heart, and imprinted a fervent kiss upon her cheek.—

"Now I'm at ease again—now I'm happy!" cried Mark,—after thanking old Atfield for his clemency, as though Priscilla were *his* property, and not her father's.—But, eager to profit by the softening of the old gentleman's heart, before the hands of his loving daughter had relinquished their pressure, he ventured to add—"You said just now, sir, of Johnny, what I should be glad indeed if my grandfather were able to say of myself,—that, from his childhood upwards, he had never given

you a moment's pain. And happy am I to be able to inform you that he is in a way to gratify your expectations by adding a hundred-and-fifty pounds a year to his income, and securing a good wife to help him take care of it:—that is, sir, if you can be prevailed upon to sanction his choice."—

"John Atfield going to be married?"—cried the old man, dropping his daughter's hand, and again contracting into sternness.—

"Not *going* to be married, my dear sir,—but *desirous* to be married,—if you oppose no objection to his choice, which has my grandfather's warmest approbation."—

"His employer's consent then was asked, previous to his father's?"—

"Not *as* his employer.—But Rose Hurstwell is my grandfather's relative and ward; and it was useless applying to *you* while uncertain of the affections of the young lady, and the approval of her family."

"Young *lady!*"—reiterated the farmer in a tone of scorn.—"What sort of a bride is o'er a young

lady in the land to make for John Atfield, the millwright?"—

"Young *woman*, I should more properly have said, sir," rejoined Mark,—who would have been content to call his cousin a "young crocodile," had the term been calculated to conciliate the fractious humour of his host.—"You may infer, from her being the kinswoman of your old friend James Egley, and chiefly brought up under his roof, that her birth and breeding threaten no great danger to the homeliness of John Atfield's housekeeping."—

The words "John Atfield's housekeeping," grated on the old man's ear:—in the first place, because, soured by early disappointment, every new person with whom he was forced into contact was more or less an object of mistrust:—in the next, because he was one of the many narrow-minded parents who contemplate but grudgingly the independence of their children.—

"And if so near and dear to your family, Master Mark," said he, "how came you, pray, to let the

young *lady* go a-begging for a husband?—How came it you did not secure her yourself?"—

"Because, my dear Mr. Atfield, by a chance which I now begin to think providential, I have never hitherto had the least fancy for settling in life.—My mind misgave me that my wild oats required a deal more sowing, before good grain was like to take root. Though, if your goodness should enable my friend Johnny to become a family-man, his example might have great influence over myself, had any body offered me, six months ago, an heiress with the face of an angel to become Mrs. M. E., I should still have said, 'hurrah for a bachelor's life!"—

"I don't know what you mean, sir, about my goodness," resumed Atfield, peevishly; while his daughter, better skilled to interpret the changes of his countenance, preserved an embarrassed silence. "If John Atfield's in circumstances to maintain a family, he wants neither help nor consent o' mine. *But if it's my* strong box he's an eye to, you may

tell him from *me*, the old man doesn't intend to take his shoes off till he goes to bed."—

"He wants nothing from you, farmer, nothing in this world, but your consent and blessing to his bride," cried Mark; "in default of which, it is but right to inform you that my grandfather would do nothing towards the match."—

"Why, what is James Egley to do towards it?"

"Double the salary of his clerk,—which nearly trebles the amount of any given in our establishment."

"And on what grounds, pray?"—

"His desire to secure the happiness of an orphan relation, by uniting her to one of the worthiest fellows breathing,—the son of his oldest friend."—

It proved so puzzling to Farmer Atfield to find a harsh rejoinder to such kind expressions, that Priscilla ventured to break into the conversation with a fond tribute to the worthiness of her brother, and the certainty that he would *be* happy and *make* happy in domestic life.—

"*I don't but say,*" replied the old man fractiously,

that three hundred a year's great 'arnings for a young fellow o' Johany's years.—I don't but say that the better half of it must be a grant from Mister Egley's generosity."—

For her father to call his old friend "Mister" Egley, Priscilla was aware that his temper had indeed, its seamy side outward.

"Still, it 's my humble belief," continued the farmer, "that John would be twice as like to thrive in the world if enjoying half the 'arnings, and harassed by none of the burthen."—

"A good argument to prevent his falling in love —were it still preventable," retorted Mark.—"But a man who is at once strongly attached, and the object of a strong attachment, is apt to get careless over his business, if his love-affairs run contrary. And if you decide, sir, that John Atfield must give up all thoughts of marrying my good and pretty little cousin, the next thing I shall expect to hear of is, his falling out with the firm.—After being so many years the industrious apprentice, disappointment may perhaps convert him into the idle one."—

"Then he 's not worth the thought we 're wasting on him!"—retorted the old man. "What, sir! —because prevented from marrying at the moment that takes his fancy, the girl who's taken his fancy, a young man is entitled to sulk with providence, and fly in the face of his benefactors! —In that case, if nobody 's to work but them as has their hearts' content, how 's the business o' life to be carried on?"—

"I can assure you, Mr. Atfield,"—Mark Egley was beginning—

"Don't assure me!"—interrupted the farmer; "If any body 's a right to speak to such a matter as we' re argooing, 'tis Jacob Atfield.—I began life, (as your grandfather has maybe told you,) a richer man than I am at this moment, after fifty years' labour and sparing!—Like your friend Johnny, I fancied that, because above the world, my happiness was nothing without a wife."—

"Admit, at least, that a taste for early marriages runs in the family!"—

"*God grant* the hopes of my son be not as

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suddenly stricken down, as mine!—By an act of treachery which it would be nothing to the purpose now to relate,—I was ruined, sir,—ruined afore I saw three-and-twenty years of age;—my plighted wife taken from me, and myself left shiftless in the world!"—

Priscilla, who, overpowered by the unusual emotion of her father, had sunk back in her chair, again affectionately took his hand.—

"But even then, though wounded to the quick," resumed, the old man,—"I did not despair. No, young man.—I know that the Almighty plants us on this earth, to struggle with evils, and not to yield to 'em.—Youth and health were still my own; and with these and a great patience, I quitted Skipton a year or two a'ter your grandfather left it to seek fortune in Loon'on;—and for thirty years, Master Mark,—thirty long years, did I toil and toil among strangers, till I had worked my way up in the world, so as to secure a maintenance; and then only, having found in Dudd'nst'n a good kind *heart as was* willin' to share it wi' me, married.—

A very happy home,—few happier—was mine, for a year or two. But soon after Prissy's birth, my poor wife was taken from me; when, finding that new cares must occupy my mind and new objects my eyes, afore I could be the same man again,—(no, not the same man again, for *that* could never be,)—but a man ready to do his best for his own behalf and his children's,—I put the babes where they were better cared for than I could care for 'em; and settled *here* in Dudbourne Dale, where there was every thing to do,—and where, praise be to God, all I have done has prospered."—

"And your children have prospered too, Mr. Atfield!" rejoined his auditor,—who was lending him the most respectful attention.—"Ask whom you please, and they will tell you that these twenty years have not brought to man's and woman's estate a young man more beloved than your son,—or," added he, in a lower voice,—"a young woman more deserving to be so than your daughter."—

"I thank God for 'em, sir, and find no fault *with 'em!*"—replied the farmer.—

"And you will, I trust, after due thinking over the business, enable me to give a satisfactory reply to this letter," resumed Mark, taking one from his pocket, and placing it in the old man's hand. And after seeing the spectacle-case duly drawn forth,—the spectacles carefully wiped and put on,—the seal as charily broken as though the wax were of gold,—and the page fairly unfolded,—Mark Egley ventured a slight signal to Priscilla to follow him silently out of the room, and leave her father to his cogitations.—

Away they stole, on tiptoe. Another moment, and they were wandering side by side, along a walk hedged with sweetbriar and honeysuckle, transplanted by the industrious hands of Prissy from the neighbouring woods; and so fragrant was the air under the shadow of the cliffs, and so sweet the evening whistle of the blackbirds in the orchard, that the Londoner might well be excused his exclamation, (when at length they rested themselves on a rural seat, among the natural rock-work surrounding which, his companion cultivated a considerable

variety of ferns and trailing-plants, overshaded high overhead by a jutting ledge of rock, known to all the country round by the name of St. Bee's Pulpit,) that "he could be content to live and die in Dudbourne Dale!"—

It was a comfort to both, when, more than an hour afterwards, they were joined by the farmer, to perceive that his eyelids were a little red, and that his deportment was softened into a gentleness foreign to his habits.—

It was clear that, as regarded the marriage between John Atfield and Rose Hurstwell, *he* was not likely to forbid the banns!—

CHAPTER V.

Considering that Mark Egley had such pleasant news to carry back to his friend as that his father consented to his marriage and trusted that he and his bride would come and spend their Christmas with him at Dudbourne Dale,—it was singular how little eagerness he showed to make the best of his way to town!—

Though, on his arrival, he had announced that the business of the firm allowed him only a week's absence, he had already, by three days, exceeded the time allowed him:—and yet he lingered!—It is true that, on accompanying Farmer Atfield to Duddonstone, on the second day of his visit, he was seen to drop a letter into the box, which *perhaps* served the double purpose of apprising poor John *of the success of* his expedition, and requesting an

extension of his furlough: a despatch from his grandfather to old Atfield being at the same moment placed in the hands of his venerable friend, to bespeak, though somewhat tardily, hospitality for the traveller.—

At all events, the hospitality was so cordially accorded, that when, day after day, the young Londoner made it his business to find out that the neighbourhood still contained some interesting antiquity, or scene to explore, as an excuse for a saunter with Priscilla or a stout trudge with her father, no one found the least fault with his deferring his departure;—unless, indeed, it were old Ruth,—a grumbler by vocation,—who began to fear that her master was about to ruin himself by a succession of lord-mayor's feasts, and exhaust her own health and patience in preparing them. —But even if of opinion, about an hour before dinner-time every day, that the young gentleman, so choice in his eating and who gave as much trouble as a lord, would be quite as well back at Milbank, no sooner was the banquet served, and

her neat kitchen cleared again, than she was ready to confess, that "a Loon'oner" who could talk to them of the doings of Master Johnny, could not be too daintily provided for.—

Not that Mark remained altogether an idle lounger—a mere obstruction to the routine of the house.—After contenting himself, at first, with admiring the trimness of Priscilla's flower-garden and the beauty of her rock-work, he ended with asking permission to assist in her tasks of weeding, or tying up and watering her plants in the cool of the evening; and, when the permission was refused, working for her in spite of herself:—while, to her father, he recommended himself by accompanying him on his daily rounds of the pastures; till he came to know the cattle by sight, and could enlarge upon their beauties, and tell the names of the different breeds and owners.

Once, indeed, during the week which he managed to spend under the roof he had at first sight presumed to call "a cavern," Mark and Pricilla strolled *again towards the sea*-shore.—But as Farmer Atfield

was of the party, and the Churchwarden's animosities against the lighthouse, though kept to himself, were unabated,—on emerging from the valley they turned southernward towards the sands; and the name of the offending Master Francis had no mention.—Prissy did not so much as cast a wistful glance towards the spot where the tower stood proudly predominant over the cliffs; seeing that she had that morning received from Job the pleasant intelligence, that the kid was, to use the terms of a court circular, "so well that no further bulletin would be issued;" and despatched back in return to the recluse, with a message of gratulation, a bunch of her best moss-roses,—a treasure such as his bleak enclosure was never likely to afford.—

She had no fear therefore, that, if his telescope chanced to betray her and her companions as wandering on the sea-shore within reach of his premises, he would consider her unkind, or ungrateful, in neglecting a second visit; and there was consequently no drawback on the joy with which the happy girl fulfilled the duties of hom-

tality towards her brother's friend,—that friend being a companion more congenial with her habits any human being within five parishes round about.—

It is true that, in the midst of those halcyon summer days, when all was so sweet and calm on earth and sea, under their thatched roof and the firmament by which it was overhung, there glanced sometimes into her heart a pang of vexation, when she found how poor were their best accommodations compared with those to which their guest was accustomed.—Not that he was low-minded enough to boast of the comforts of his London life.—But in reply to Farmer Atfield's circumstantial questioning concerning the habits of his old friend, the prosperity of the firm, and the prospects of his son, it was impossible to deny that, for some years past, Mr. Egley had accommodated his modes of life to the profits of his business; of which his own share amounted to much above a thousand a year.—There *was an elder* partner, indeed, whose gains doubled *those of the* able mechanic who had brought only

industry and intelligence, instead of money, to invest in the firm.—

"But Harmer is an old bachelor," added Mark, laughing, "who, if he take the lion's share out of the till, has all but promised that, at his death, it shall return to us again. His residence adjoins the foundry; which he calls his child and cares for little but the prosperity and aggrandisement of Harmer, Egley, and Co. I am persuaded he feels prouder while reading those names engraved on some noble engine ordered for foreign exportation, than a lord on reading *his* in the peerage!"

"My brother's letters often speak of Mr. Harmer's kindness," observed Priscilla.

"Between ourselves, 'tis a hard-run race which of us shall stand best with the old fellow!—Each intends to be his heir;—and, to do him justice, at present his affections are divided pretty impartially between us.—I'm only afraid," continued he, laughing, "*that Johnny*, with a wife and family, will get *the start of* me in his favour.—Johnny will be

christening his eldest hopeful, 'Harmer Atfield,' and so cutting me out."—

The farmer would have retorted, "Get a wife of your own, then, lad! and be even with him!" had not his pretty daughter been making tea for them at that moment, under the shade of his favourite lime-tree; and, more especially, had not a word or two in the letter of his old friend James Egley, hinted that a choice was already made for his grandson.—

"I'm afraid I must admit,' continued Mark, "that Johnny is more deserving than myself of the old man's favour. Were he to leave his money to *me*, other names than those of Harmer, Egley, & Co. would have to be engraved on all future engines turned out of the foundry. The very next day, I would say 'good-bye Milbank!' and cut the concern.—*My* nature is not like the lark's, which, soars singing into the skies, while its nest is in the dirt;—and to me the noise and smother of the river-side are as overpowering as if I had always lived in *Dulbourne Dale*.—Whereas John, like his master,

takes such pride in the credit of the house, that I verily believe he would prefer being stifled in the old shop, to living at his ease in the prettiest shooting-box in Surrey!"

"Johnny is country-bred," said Priscilla, smiling; "and we are told that it is in the nature of man to prefer change and novelty."—

"Nay, nay! In *woman's*,—in woman's!"—interrupted Mark. "I promise you, Miss Atfield, that my notions of happiness are precisely what they used to be when I was a schoolboy; *i.e.*, all play and no work,—two or three thousand a year chinking in my pockets, and a pretty wife and loving children to help me spend it."—

"If them 's your notions, young gentleman," interposed Farmer Atfield, gravely,—"it strikes me you should ha' been born a prince o' the blood, instead of a manoefact'rer's son."

"A prince of the blood?—Not I, if 'twere to be had for asking for!" retorted the young man, unabashed by the grave looks he had called forth. "There 's *nothing* in what I'm hankering after,

that I 'm not likely to enjoy before I 'm ten years older!—The only thing that makes me think of it with a sigh is, that it will not be mine till I have lost my kind, good grandfather!"—

Old Atfield's reply was an involuntary glance at the horsehair furniture of his only sitting-room, and the walnut-presses which constituted its chief ornament, plainly implying—"If I 'd known you were so dainty, 'twould have been long enough before I invited you to share our rough household and frugal fare."—Even Prissy was unable to repress a sigh as she thought of the poor figure they must cut in the eyes of a guest so fastidious; and half repented the earnestness with which she had more than once pressed him to prolong his visit.—

The time was come, however, when further delay was out of the question. All the persuasions in the world,—scarcely even the tears that trembled in the dark-gray eyes of Priscilla when he spoke of departure,—could blind him to the necessity of being in town on the first of August; to enter in the *books of the firm* the settlements he had recently

made at Manchester and Liverpool, and instruct his friend Johnny concerning the orders he had received. He was to ride over Whitbeck to Duddon Bridge with the farmer, (his portmanteau being previously despatched from Duddonstone by the carrier's cart,) make the best of his way by the day-coach to Lancaster, and thence in all haste to town.

The previous evening had been more silent than usual.—The farmer, preparing for a day's absence from home, was in the valley with his cow-boys;—and, a sort of uneasy consciousness rendering it painful to Priscilla to find herself tête-à-tête with her depressed companion, she was the first to propose adjourning, for another half-hour, to the seat under the old lime-tree, which was embalming the quiet twilight with its fragrance.—The evening star trembled over their heads, in unison with the emotion of hearts that were fluttering they knew not why—or rather knew too well!—Still, nothing was said that could lay bare to either the struggling feelings of the other.—If, in alluding to the happy fortunes of John Atfield and Rose Hurstwell, there

voices faltered, no one had a right to say, (if a "one" of any kind had been within hearing,) that their bosoms were moved by any other sympathy than that of a sister and a friend.—

Still less the ground for saucy comments on the manner of their final farewell!—Priscilla appeared twice as anxious that her father should be in time for his dinner at Duddon Bridge, as that Mark should not miss the coach; and though, just before the latter jumped upon the brown mare, (which had occasionally had the honour of carrying Priscilla,) he asked her for a sprig of the jessamine which covered the porch under which they were standing, and instead of placing it in his buttonhole, as she expected, caused it to disappear, perhaps, into the pocket of his waistcoat, but wholly out of sight, the young man's vow that, till they met again, that flower should be treasured next his heart, was silently recorded.—

"Gone!" murmured poor Priscilla, as she folded her hands over the gate from which, after watching *their departure*, she strained her eyes to see them

wind their way along the Dale,—"gone,—and likely enough we may never meet again!—What a dream has it all been,—how bewildering,—and how pleasant!—How little I thought, when my brother's letters talked so much of his attachment to the madcap friend who caused him such anxious hours, that the same Mark Egley would ever be the cause of anxious hours to myself!"—

As she slowly took her way back to the house, she dreaded to encounter the coarse grumblings of Ruth, concerning the trouble and waste occasioned by the prolonged sojourn of such a guest.—Yet it was almost a greater evil when, instead of finding cause for complaint, the old woman, (whom the Londoner's liberality at parting had converted into the most obsequious of his partisans,) burst out into exaggerated encomiums; wishing herself and her young mistress no worse luck than that "the braw yoong mon who behaved like a prince, but was as simple to deal wi' as the poorest dalesman 'twixt that and Whitbeck, might coom back and court her for a wife."—

To put a stop to Ruth's aspirations in her favour, Priscilla apprised her that, about Christmas time, her favourite, Master Johnny, was likely to visit them with a bride:—an announcement which threw the old creature into a state of wonderment and joy, under cover of which, Priscilla retreated to her own room for the indulgence of her regrets. If night had not set in before her father returned from his expedition, he could scarcely have failed to notice the embarrassment of her manner, or the unwonted paleness of her cheeks.

But though a fond father, old Atfield was neither observant nor communicative. He was, moreover, the last man on earth to fancy it more necessary than usual to converse with his little daughter, lest she might feel the loss of her agreeable companion. On the contrary, he congratulated her on the morrow, that all her trouble and fuss, her housewifery and lionizing, were at an end.

"For in course, my dear," said he, "you, who never so much as looked upon James Egley's face, *couldn't be expected* to take as I did to his grand-

son. And I'm beholden to you, Prissy, for the kind manner in which you've guv' up your time to this young man ; part for your brother's sake, no doubt, and part for mine."—

Happy was it for his daughter, that the business which a week's holiday-making had heaped upon his shoulders, left him no leisure for noting her unusual absence of mind, arising from a multitude of new impressions derived from Mark Egley's conversation. — Persons, things, and opinions, of which she had never heard before, were beginning to stand out like distinct images in her mind; and the London he described, at once so glibly and so graphically,— the London of spirit, enterprise, luxury, and ease,— assumed but too alluring a charm, compared with the lonesome valley where not a sound responded to the cry of her young heart but the ripple of the Dudbourne, the lowing of the cattle, and the cawing of the rooks.

Even after his business was set in order again, his churchwarden squabbles made smooth, and his few fields of corn near Duddonstone reaped and

intent;" and that his invitation to Mark to accompany the young couple, as bridesman, was not a mere empty compliment.—

"You may be sure I didn't clench my bargain with neighbour Airey," resumed her father—"till I'd looked in at the Duddon-Bridge Savings' Bank, and made out what's lying at interest,—'yond the sum set apart for your portion, Priss, in case any honest young fellow hereabouts should ask you to be his wife."—

Priscilla of course interrupted him with the declaration incumbent on young ladies so apostrophized, — that "nothing would induce her to marry, so long as she could enjoy a happy home with so kind a father."

"The more reason, then, we should do our best to gi' ye a little elbow-room!" retorted the old man, who saw only what was natural in the resolution. —"So as I was saying, Neighbour Airey and I took a pint together this afternoon, on the bargain; and to-morrow the workmen are to be here."—

A grand event in the dale,—for half a dozen

carpenters and masons, with a couple of cart-fuls of building-materials, to be seen jogging to Farmer Atfield's premises: and wild were the speculations in Duddonstone to which it gave rise. —For, though he had purchased some thirty acres of the township, and had a long lease of the pasturage of Dudbourne Dale, the tenements hitherto erected on the property were of so slight a nature, that every one had been prepared to see him desert the spot and return to his old quarters, as soon as his daughter arrived at woman's estate.—But that he should build a new house there, or, as the gossips would have it, a "royil palice," was so out of their calculation, that no wonder some should say he had found a crock of gold; others, that the handsome young gentleman who had accompanied him and his daughter to church, two Sundays before, was a great lord in disguise, come to create John Atfield a barrownight, marry his daughter, and convert his tumble-down farm into what the advertisements call a spacious modern residence.—

Had the arrival of the workmen been connected

with any family event of less importance than her brother's marriage, Priscilla could not but have grieved a little at seeing her beds of choice anemones trodden over, and the musk-roses she had trained over the frontage of the old house torn down, to make way for scaffold-poles and mortar-heaps. Before a couple of days were at an end, the thriving little flower-garden was a waste; while old Ruth, indignant at not having been consulted about the necessity for all this trouble and outlay, began to mutter between the few teeth which time had left her, that "some folks was getting too uppish, and that pride would have a fall."—

She even ventured a hint that since four rooms were about to increase the hard work of the house, they might look elsewhere for a bondswoman.—For the farmer had not yet confided to his daughter that he intended to extend his household as well as his house; and there was consequently some pretext for the grumblings with which, every evening, old Ruth surveyed the dust and rubbish encumbering *the place.* Even Crony went sulking about the

premises;—having no longer wherewithal to lay his head, now that a couple of ladders and a heap of stones had usurped his customary place in the morning sun.—The only person perfectly content, was the farmer — Except when vestry business carried him from home, seldom was he now seen stopping for a bit of chat in the market-place of Duddonstone, or chaffering with the Northern drovers in the tap of the Nag's Head.—When not peremptorily occupied by his farm, he would stand hour after hour, with his hands in the pockets of his fustian-jacket, watching the progress of the masons, and listening to the chipping of their trowels, as though there were music in the sound. No salaried clerk of the works could have had his eye more constantly on the alert.

On the fine October day on which he beheld the new building roofed in, neatly slated, and standing in square and trimly regularity, detached from the cliffs and the humble domicile thereunto abutting (so much more picturesque than commodious) the happy man gave a supper to the workmen, at

which, more ale and cider was wasted in healths to the prosperity of his roof-tree, than had ever before endangered the sobriety of a Churchwarden of Duddonstone.

CHAPTER VI.

The letters that reached Dudbourne Dale from London, meanwhile, were all that the fondest wishes of Priscilla could desire.—Her brother was the happiest,—his friend the *unhappiest* of men!—In addition to the grateful and respectful letter which John Atfield acknowledged the acquiescence of his father, Rose Hurstwell replied, at the length, to the friendly little note from Prissy which Mark Egley was the bearer; and a sisterly correspondence was instantly established between two girls. That it might interfere as little as possible with his duties to the firm, young Atfield's marriage was to take place in December, that his Christmas holidays might suffice for a honeymoon; although his sister was faithful to the promise dictated by *her father*, that she would not afford the

slightest hint of the preparations making for his reception, or in any way allude to the growing splendours of their abode, there existed no obstacle to her avowal of the eagerness with which she was looking forward to the winter, or the joy she anticipated in making acquaintance with her new sister.—

In her letters to Rose and the bridegroom-expectant, she managed, of course, to slip a message, or P.S., addressed to Mark.—It was only natural to say—"Let your friend Mr. Egley know that the patch of bell-heather he took such pains to transplant to my rock-work, is flourishing; and that I hope, some day or other, to show it him."—Or, "Tell Mr. Egley, that if he should ever visit this out-of-the-way place again, he will find I have carefully arranged the shells we collected the day of our expedition to the Wardern rocks;—and that the poor little animal whose leg was broken by Crony, is quite well again.—But assure him I shall not think of venturing a second time to the lighthouse, *unless he should* be disposed to accompany you

here at Christmas, and renew his flirtation with Lame Moggy."—

Such messages naturally produced rejoinders: of a nature equally insipid to the uninitiated, and equally charming to the young couple; who, as they had met in a Cumbrian dale instead of at a Veronese palace, could not be expected to express their sentiments in the impassioned phrase of Shakspere's immortal lovers.— By degrees, the correspondence that passed between Rose Hurstwell and Priscilla, might just as well have passed between Priscilla and Mark, for anything it contained not absolutely relating to the interests and feelings of those who had invaded the domain of Master Francis; and if old Egley had really matrimonial views for his grandson, or the farmer for his daughter, they were inexcusable for not perceiving how brilliant a bloom suffused the face of the latter whenever a letter arrived from Milbank; or with how much warmer an interest Mark was beginning to regard his kinswoman, now that she was about to enter the Atfield family, than when, in the bloom of her girlish

beauty, a very short courtship might have sufficed to make her his own.—

Not, however, that *their* characters were as well assimilated for holy matrimony as those of Rose and John Atfield.

"If I and my cousin Mark had come together," Rose Hurstwell would sometimes say, in answer to her lover's anxieties lest his quiet disposition and reserved manners should render her less happy than she deserved,—"it would have been like the collision of two grains of gunpowder: the first spark must have produced a frightful concussion."—

"Whereas, with *me*," pleaded John, "you feel so certain of having your own way, that even my poverty and homeliness, thrown into the scale, did not decide you against me!"—

The light-hearted Rose laughed too heartily at finding herself accused of a disposition to tyranny, to look like a VERY alarming despot.—

"Whatever faults I may have," was her frank reply, "will soon be corrected at Dudbourne Dale. *If I am* to believe half I hear from my cousin

Mark, though you should happen to prove an indifferent husband, I am secure of the most perfect sister-in-law in the world!"

It was unnecessary further to explain how many times in the course of the day her cousin Mark adverted to his visit to Dudbourne Dale; and indulged in hopes of obtaining leave of absence to accompany her on her bridal expedition.

Whenever, from the cheerful balcony of his uncle's house, they witnessed some boat-race, or the animated aspect which even a fine Sunday imparts to the gay surface of the Thames, he was sure to indulge in exclamations of—"If Priscilla were only here!—How this mighty stream,—how these multitudes of people, would surprise and delight her!—But you must bring her back with you, Rose, or, at least, persuade your father-in-law to promise you a visit in the spring.—That charming girl must not be shut up for life among the cattle and frogs of Dudbourne Dale."

His cousin was perhaps more in his grandfather's *confidence than* himself, on the subject of such a

visit. For she was often admitted to private
ferences with Mr. Egley, after his daily bus
was over, in which the name of Atfield had
frequent mention than could bear reference
clusively to Johnny. From the time, indeed, tha
old man had obtained a solid standing in the w
his first thought, after the happy establishme
his son, was to promote the advancement o
children of the friend of his early youth; and
of those connected with his business believed
young Atfield was destined to become a fu
partner in the firm: his steadiness and intellig
promising more for its prosperity, than the car
habits of the pleasure-loving Mark.—

"At all events, I must have my grandson
'till he's thirty," old Egley had been heard to sa
moments of unreserve, "if only to keep him o
mischief, and teach him the value of money. A
that,—let him do as he will!—I've been too h
working a man in my day, to leave much to d
those that come after me, except to hang their
up in the hall;—and I'm not one of those

forbid!), who think there's nothing worth caring for in life beyond a good balance at the tail of one's banker's book, or piles of gold in the safe."—

So far from feeling surprised that Farmer Atfield was beginning to place his establishment on a more comfortable footing, the millwright would have been, on the contrary, amazed to learn that the old man's amended fortunes had not, long ago, determined him to a better style of living, had his grandson been able to talk on his return to town of anything but the gray eyes of Priscilla, or the picturesque valley of the Dudbourne.—Finding Mark in such ecstasy with his visit, Mr. Egley had reason to suppose that his worthy friend was enjoying, with deference to their several degrees of competence, the same personal comforts as himself.

"No—I never saw the mother of John and Priscilla," said he, one day, in answer to the three hundredth question his grandson had asked him, that morning, in reference to the Atfield family.—"During the four years she survived her marriage, my friend *Jacob* talked sometimes of bringing her

to town to see me; but oftener of getting me down into the country, for a peep at his wife and babes. —But Mrs. Atfield fell ill immediately after the birth of the girl;—and visits in the house of sickness afford more pain than pleasure."—

"Tell the truth, sir,—and own you found it as hard a matter then as you do now, to uproot yourself from house and home!" retorted Mark. "You don't like sleeping in strange beds,—you don't like missing your morning paper damp from the press."—

"Don't say *that*, Mark!" cried the old man. "It has more than once crossed my mind to go down wedding-keeping, next winter, to Dudbourne Dale. Jacob Atfield has asked me, you know: and it strikes me that we're both of us too near the brink of the grave for the word 'nay' to pass between us."—

"In *my* opinion, 'twould be a sin and shame to disappoint the poor old man!"—cried Mark.—

"More particularly," added his grandfather, "*since* now you're grown so steady, my dear

grandson, I should'nt be at all uneasy at leaving the business in your hands for a week or so. And as you've been so lately in the north," added he, carefully watching the changes of his grandson's countenance,—"you, at all events, will be glad to be let off a second country visit, at so dreary a season of the year."—

At such a hint, the face of poor Mark grew almost as long as that of Master Francis while contemplating the broken leg of his kid.—To avoid the danger of having his grandfather form a decided plan and fully explain it, he hastened back to the early days of Farmer Atfield.—

"You talk of being on the brink of the grave, my dear grandfather," said he; "but, in spite of all that is said of the unwholesomeness of a London life, I promise you, you wear better than your friend in the north!"—

"And yet I am two years his senior,"—cried old Egley.—"It was for fighting his battles when we worked our way, more than sixty years ago, *through the* grammar-school at Skipton, that Jacob

was to delay for a short time the crash which was to drive him from the country, to enable him to complete the seduction of his brother's betrothed wife."—

"My dear grandfather, such turpitude cannot exist in human nature!" cried Mark; "least of all among simple-hearted country folks, like the Atfields!"—

"Nevertheless, when Frank Atfield fled the country, the girl my poor friend had been on the eve of making his wife, was the companion of his flight!"—

"The jade!—The rascal!"—

"Taking with her the last guinea of the unhappy man they had so cruelly deceived."—

"Enough to make him throw himself head foremost into the Ribble!"

"Enough to make *you*, Master Mark,—who are apt to follow the first impulse of your passions," remonstrated the grandfather. "But Jacob Atfield had in his nature the best qualities of A MAN! *Jacob was pious*, brave, trustful. Instead of sink-

ing under the blow, he submitted himself to the will of Him who had given and taken away; and the first word I heard from him of his misfortunes, was written from a distant part of the country, acquainting me that having lost his all, he had engaged himself as a day-labourer; and meant to live, and hoped to prosper, by the sweat of his brow. He thought himself a lucky man, he said, to have escaped marriage with one so weak and wicked as Mary Gray. As to his brother, he hoped God might forgive him; but as *he* never could, he begged me to refrain from mentioning his name."—

"And do you mean, sir, that from this penniless state, Farmer Atfield worked his way to his present competence?"—

"Why not?—Since from a hundred pounds, your grandfather worked *his* to an income of eighteen hundred a year?—It was not, however, wholly by the labour of his hands he managed, five years afterwards, to stock his farm. By that time, I was enabled to pay him back, with interest, the *sum which*, on starting in life, was a free gift: and

thus, God be praised, we have been able by mutual assistance to conduce to each other's advancement in life."—

"The first obligation, however was conferred upon yourself."—

"Who denies it, Mark?—or rather, who can be more sensible of it than I am?" rejoined his grandfather.—"What other consideration do you suppose induced me to undertake the education and charge of John Atfield, as though a grandson of my own?—No, no!—Jacob and I have been as one flesh from the day we took the same hornbook in hand;—and brothers I trust we shall remain, till together we render our great account."—

"Just as between John and myself!"—rejoined his grandson.—"I don't remember having enjoyed a pleasanter surprise than the discovery that Johnny had taken a fancy to my cousin Rose; and that we were likely to become relations. And if I can only prevail upon you, sir, to accompany the bride and groom at Christmas to Dudbourne Dale, for a visit to your old friend, I think I can promise—that is I

almost venture to hope—or, to speak more plainly, I am certain you would feel disposed to—to—"

"To *what*, Mark?" demanded his grandfather, bringing to a point the stammering of the young man, who was little in the habit of finding shyness an obstacle to his fluency.

"To——oh! nothing—nothing particular, sir.—I only meant that you could not fail to be overjoyed at witnessing the prosperity and domestic happiness of Johnny's father."—

"And of *Priscilla's* father!" almost rose to old Egley's lips.—But he was too well pleased to see that his long-standing interdiction against hearing the words "love" or "matrimony" from the lips of his grandson, till he attained his five-and-twentieth year, maintained a sufficient influence over the young man's inclinations to keep his secret, for the present, seething and fermenting in a heart which, now that absence had fanned the flame of its passion, could dream of nothing but Dudbourne Dale.—

But that he found so ready an auditress in Rose

Hurstwell for his bursts of enthusiasm concerning the high qualities of the Atfields,—their probity, their steadiness, industry, frugality, and usefulness of life,—he would have scarcely been able to control his desire of confessing all to his grandfather, and imploring him to set aside any matrimonial projects he might have formed on his account, in favour of one whose life was as pure as an angel's and whose face as fair.—But Rose listened to him.—Rose comforted him. Rose, like himself, lived upon hope.—As a bee provides future sustenance from the loveliest objects in nature, her pleasant time was spent in collecting materials for her future household, while listening to praises of her dear Johnny; which, for gratitude's sake, Mark Egley could not confine exclusively to Priscilla.—

Both of them had need, just then, of all the sunshine inherent in their nature. For there was none without.—It was one of those dreary autumns when October contrives to look as like November as some plain, morose girl aping the gravity of an *elder sister*.—Every day, rain,—every night, fog!—

The Thames, so ready to reflect upon its waters the faintest smile beaming upon them from the face of nature, ran chill, and dull, and leaden-looking in its oozy bed. No change, — excepting when some harder day's rain than ordinary rendered the turbid river still more opaque. The barges went sullenly and sluggishly along; the steamers plied their paddles with scarce a passenger on deck;—and every pleasure-craft was laid up for the season.— Poor Mark, who, like most young men living on the banks of the river, found his chief recreation in boating, seemed almost to have forgotten that there existed such places as Richmond, or Greenwich;—having said farewell to his "trim-built wherry" a month before the usual time.—

Every body agreed that they were paying heavily, in so rainy an autumn, for the fine summer they had been enjoying.— Apothecaries hurried about from house to house, like a flight of crows when there is a death-taint on the air; pronouncing, in so lugubrious a tone, that it was "a sickly season," as *to create among* their old and infirm patients a

panic capable of generating an epidemic.—It was whispered that typhus had broken out in the Milbank Penitentiary; that the fever-hospitals had not a bed vacant; that the over-populated districts in the lower part of Westminster—a disgrace to the curators of the public health — were becoming cleared by a frightful mortality.—

With the best inclination to disbelieve these evil rumours, the state of the weather was only too sadly confirmative.—Instead of the brisk airs sent before it by the approach of winter, as military music announces some coming brigade, the atmosphere hung heavy and clammy upon the housetops; and even during the intervals of rain, sufficed to moisten the pavement.—If a breath of air stole through an open window, instead of whisking through the house, it proved of so languid and unwholesome a nature, as to sink exhausted in the nearest corner.—The very dust lay dead where it was overlooked by the listless housewife. There was not life enough in the stagnant atmosphere to *raise it from* the ground!—

Even the cheerfulness of a house where a wedding is in progress, could scarcely make head against the dreariness certain to arise from such a season.—Though little addicted to hypochondriacism, even old Egley began to croak predictions of rheumatics to himself, and endless privations to the poor. But his grandson and John Atfield united in efforts to dispel his fits of blue-devils; and a blazing fire, a sociable breakfast, and the re-assurance conveyed by the first edition of the *Times*, that though the climate might be poorly, the money-market was brisk and stirring, seldom failed to cheer his spirits.—

"Old folks are so superstitious, Rose," observed Mark to his cousin, "that you must be on your guard against allowing my grandfather to take into his head that the season is unpropitious.—Take care that he does not fancy himself either sick or sorry; or we shall be having him unable to attend to business. And then, what chance of a holiday to Johnny and myself, for our expedition to Dudbourne Dale?"—

CHAPTER VII.

But if John Atfield and his friend were forced to exert themselves to counteract the untoward influence of the season, no such effort was requisite on the part of Priscilla.—Though for every shower that fell in London, in Cumberland there were ten, the pre-occupied mind of the farmer beheld nothing but perpetual sunshine.—His pride in his son, his love for the old friend who through life had been as sympathetic with him as his right hand with his left, endowed the coming Christmas with such a charm, that the establishment of workmen on his premises, usually so great a nuisance to all sorts and conditions of men, produced no annoyance to old Atfield,—

On the contrary,—the masons and slaters had *barely completed* their work, before the plasterer

and carpenters were introduced: and the utmost earnestness of his daughter could scarcely prevent his bringing painters and paper-hangers into request before the walls were either dry or settled.—

The Duddonstone neighbours, displeased at Farmer Atfield's projecting such a palace without consulting them, and perhaps a little envious of his means of carrying his plans into effect, prophesied of course that the walls would *never* dry, and the floors *never* settle;—a building completed in so rainy a season being as casual as if founded on the sea-sand.—But, closely sheltered by the cliffs from stress of weather, old Atfield's house had come in for a far more moderate share of the recent rains than Duddonstone Market-place; and it was only because the Dudbourne ran so swollen in its channel, or rather so beyond its channel, that the farmer was fully aware that his weather-glass, which had stood three weeks at "much rain," had *fully established its* veracity.—

Lest Priscilla should give too much attention to

his overhasty constructions, he was perpetually reminding her that much preparation was essential to hospitality on so large a scale as he contemplated; since he intended to feast his friends by way of housewarming, as well as to do honour to the wedding of his son.—Their usual stores must consequently be doubled. Though the capacious kitchen-chimney was crowded with hams, though throughout the Autumn, the finest fruit had been carefully clarified into preserves, and though Prissy herself had suggested a double stock of potted-charr from Duddon Water, her father was far from satisfied with their provisions. A stirring and experimental young woman had been engaged, to spare old Ruth all extra-work; and, on seeing a new oven added to the kitchen, (which, thanks to the present arrangements, was no longer the entrance to the house,) the grumbling old woman became convinced that the rumours of the neighbourhood were correct, and that her master had discovered a hidden treasure.—

While Priscilla, in obedience to her father's com-

mands, was engaged in housewifery for the benefit of their expected guests, the indignant Ruth kept pouring into her ears the reports transmitted to her by Job the fisherman concerning their accession of fortune, and the general opinion that so rash an outlay of it would never come to good.—

"*Mark me* if it do, Miss Atfield!"—mumbled the old woman; and while Priscilla was trying to shake off the impression produced by hearing spoken at random the word she was evermore murmuring in the depths of her heart, there was no turning a deaf ear to the fact recorded by Ruth,—that, ever since the workmen planted the first scaffold-pole, a screech-owl, (a rare bird in Dudbourne Dale,) had stationed itself in or near the new premises; startling every night the inmates of the farm out of their sleep by its appalling cry.—Nay, though Jem the cowboy had been allowed to discharge the farmer's fowling-piece for some successive nights, after dark, in the direction where it was supposed to perch, the bird of night only shifted its place; and *was heard uttering* still more piercing shrieks from

a tree in the orchard, to resume on the morrow its original post.—

"Oy, oy!—doomb things oft see mair afoor 'em than the woisest Christians!"—ejaculated Ruth. "There 's Croony,—puir doog!—it goes to ane's heart joost ta see him spend the moorning i' dugging o' graves a' roon' the hoose.—Luik yersel', Muss Prussy, an' you 're dooting me!—Oonly luik yersel."—

And though Priscilla, with her accustomed good-humoured deference to the cross old creature, stepped out in compliance with her request, and perceived that the lurcher had really scratched up, in four or five different places near the house, large apertures more than sufficient to admit his long body, and consequently bearing considerable resemblance to a grave,—it was useless to remind the bigoted woman that Crony, having been deprived by the new buildings of his favourite resting-place, was naturally on the look-out for a new one; and during the inclement weather, kept seeking a comfortable

shelter.

"Na, na! Muss—people's na sae far wrong wha thinks ta puir doog is makkin' loong-hames for the whool' femily!" cried Ruth. And on this gloomy text did she preach, and preach; assuring her young mistress that the Northern lights had been observed in the neighbourhood of Keswick, where they had never been seen before since the Rising, so disastrous to Cumberland, in '45.—

"Don't hope to frighten *me*, Ruth!" was Priscilla's undaunted reply.—"Wedlock, and not war, is just now our business, in Dudbourne Dale; weather will be too cold for screech-owls hnny and his wife make their appearance, ay, poor fellow, will by that time have taken station for the winter by the parlour-fire, will be an end, at least to two of your bad s!"—

"Him as sent THEM warnings, Muss, will na doot find means to send mair!"—persisted the obstinate Ruth. "Unless, indeed, his day o' vengeance should be coom,—and his joodgments overtak' *us*."—

It was something that Miss Atfield was able to prevent the prophetess from communicating her evil auguries to the farmer.—Not that they would have had much effect in damping his elated spirits; but because indignation that any one should presume to hang up a black flag on the new house where he was preparing to welcome his son, might have tempted him into ejecting his old servant from his premises. —Whichever way *he* looked, he saw nothing but prosperity; and why should others be further-sighted?—

And yet,—so little apt is human nature to gain experience from the chastenings afforded for our enlightenment,—it happened that, twice before in his life, the farmer had fancied himself at the acmé of earthly felicity; and both times, to be precipitated prematurely to the depths of despair!—In early youth, just when he had chosen his wife and farm, surrounded by gratulating friends and sunny prospects, and confiding in himself beyond what it is permitted to frail mortals to confide,—the events of *an hour had* blighted his golden harvest,—After

lying down to rest the happiest and hopefullest of men, he had awoke into a world that afforded no resting-place for the sole of his foot,—nor a heart nor home he could call his own! And when, more than thirty years afterwards, having by dint of patient labour converted those thorns into vines, and enabled himself to gather figs from thistles,—established in a comfortable farm with an affectionate helpmate and a fair child nestling on her knee,—he presumed to fancy that he had conquered fate, and gave full loose to the exultation of his soul,—the day that brought little Priscilla to crown his happiness, left behind it in his house, as if forgotten, that fatal scythe, which, but a few months afterwards, levelled his pride with the dust, and left him the helpless father of two motherless children.—

Since then, twenty years had elapsed. The sustaining hand of Providence had brought him once more into paths of pleasantness and peace; and he was again presuming to lift up his voice and say—"*Soul*, take thine ease!"—As if it were only to

take ease, that man who is born of woman is required to make the pilgrimage of this briary world!—

"Tell Ruth to be stirring by daylight to-morrow, my dear," said the farmer, one night, as his daughter was retiring to rest.—"The people will be here betimes, from Dudd'nst'n, with the carpets to lay down."—

"The *carpets*?" cried Priscilla, aghast,—"with the walls still so damp, that the bordering of the newly-papered sitting-room is coming down already?"—

"You should have had a fire lighted there, my dear!"

"There has been one every day since the glaziers put in the windows, father. Still, the mortar of the new ceiling smells so damp!"—

"You should have opened the windows to-day. —The air was dry, and there was a gleam of sun-prospe about noon."—

permitted to frains are kept open every day, father, *an hour had* blig begins to rise."—

"Then what on the 'varsal earth, lass, are you feared on?" cried he, a little impatiently.—"I sometimes fancy, Priss, from all the rumpus you make about the danger o' hurrying the workmen, that you're jealous o' the pains I'm taking to make a comfortable home for Johnny and his wife!"—

"No, father!—I'm sure you don't think that," rejoined his daughter. "I'm sure you *can't* think such a thing!"—cried Priscilla, with rising indignation.—

"Then don't keep grumbling about the danger o' haste and hurry, to them as is quite as well able to decide such matters as yourself.—Airey's foreman tells me that the Dredswell Station 'us,—a palace to look at,—Lowther Castle can scarce be grander,—was begun, ended, and inhabited in three weeks! From the first stroke o' the trowel till the chimney smoked, 'twas'n't a calendar month!"—

Such being her father's persuasions, Priscilla could only submit in silence; more particularly since, with the aid of constant fires, the new rooms *were literally* in a habitable state.—Her own time,

too, was fully taken up in restoring, with the aid of the "bucolical juvenal," whose knock-knees were not always employed on the milking pail, the garden, so sadly devastated by the masons. The gravel-walk before the house had been turned and raked into its pristine smoothness,—the box border carefully renovated.—The winter aconites, and early yellow amaryllises were budding.—By the time the working-gardener from Duddonstone, who twice or thrice a month placed the borders in condition, had done a few days' work with his spade and pruning-knife, all would be looking as a winter-garden ought to look;—the vegetable-beds fully stocked, and the fruit-trees clear from moss. As not a vestige of frost had appeared, the gorse and heather were still not only green, but exhibited, here and there, a straggling blossom;—while the service and mountain-ash trees still mingled a few scarlet berries with their decayed leaves.—

And yet, November was come and gone!—Had any one doubted it, the hoarse voice of the Dud*bourne growling* in the valley, might have satisfied

him that winter wa thoroughly set in, and that the protracted rains had swollen those uncertain waters beyond all precedent.—The little stream might now be called a torrent.—Masses of foam were collected in its windings, wherever some fragment of rock opposed the force of the current;—and the farmer, though unobservant enough, in general, of the beauties of nature, persuaded his daughter to equip herself in her thickest shoes, and accompany him so far as the fall called Duddon-Force, by which the Dudbourne escaped from its mountain-lake; which, usually a clear and compact springlet, falling from a height of about sixty feet, was now a roaring cataract, almost rivalling the impetuous fall of Lodore.—

"It is, indeed, a fine sight!" exclaimed Priscilla,—gazing with awe-struck eyes on the foam scattered upon the withered fern by its ungovernable ardour. "If dry weather should not intervene between this and the 20th, to lower the level of Duddon-water, what a fine spectacle this will afford to the *Londoners!*"—

And as they retraced their way homewards towards what had already acquired in the neighbourhood the name of the New House, there were portions of the dale where the force of the current, as it went eddying round fragments of rock, was such as to dizzy the eye of the spectator.—

"Who would ever believe, father," said Priscilla, as she raised her eyes to the naked cliffs, whose birch-trees, brambles, and briar-roses had shed their leaves, so that nothing but bare stems and the red buds of the dog-wood relieved their dun monotony, concealed at times from view by the mountain-mists,—"who would ever believe that this roaring torrent, and these naked crags, were the same timid stream and richly-clothed pinnacles which Mr. Rigley compared with Dove Dale, and was partial enough to call the Happy Valley!"—

"And so it is—and so it *shall be* the Happy Valley, lass!" cried her father, who had never, however, heard the name of Rasselas, to which Mark and Priscilla alluded.—"I shall be disappointed indeed *if my* daughter-in-law don't find it a

pleasanter spot than any in the cities of London and Westminster, to say nothing of the borough of Southwark. — Many an artist and book-making gentleman has visited the place since I first came to live here, who gave it the whip-hand uvver Borrowdale itself."—

Priscilla also gave it the preference over Borrowdale, and every other dale in the world. But she would not have been the less glad, now that her preparations rendered it indispensable occasionally to visit Duddonstone, if the eddying stream had not approached quite so near the cliffs in two spots between the New House and Duddon Force, where the jutting rocks formed a right angle in the vale, so as to ensure wet feet for the remainder of the morning. — Nothing short of her girlish agility would have undertaken the effort of overleaping that foaming marge; which sometimes only soddened the turf, and sometimes reached the ankle of the persevering pedestrian.—

"Maister Francis's respects to you, Muss Atfield," said old Job, accosting her one day in so unaccus-

tomed a guise that she had some difficulty in recognizing the husband of Lame Moggy,—"Maister Francis's respects to you, muss, and aboot the 20th of the moonth you're to please goo and loodge in Dood'nst'n."—

"I rather think *not!*"—she replied, a little astonished at the peremptory wording of the message;—"for, on the 21st, my brother and sister are to be here."—

"Ay—and the new moon's to be here!"—added Job, with an oracular nod,—compelled for once, by the force of circumstances, to have an opinion of his own.—

"But what has the new moon to do, Job, with my lodging in Duddonstone?"—

"Joost the spring toide, muss,—that's a'!"—

"Spring tides have never frightened me out of house and home yet, Job,"—said Miss Atfield.—"The utmost harm they ever did us, was by obliging my father to hovel the cattle till the pastures dried again."—

"*Ye ken yer oon* matters best,"—rejoined Job.

"I coom to worn ye, to pleasure Maister Francis. —Sae joost sot by'r oon foir-side, as yer moind loikes ye."—

Satisfied that the lighthouse-man — a man of telescopes and almanacks, and learned in maritime mysteries,—would not have been at the cost of despatching a special messenger to the New House on idle grounds, Priscilla judged it right to acquaint her father, as though the tidings came solely from the cove, that an unusually high tide was expected on the 20th of December; which, unluckily for the arrival of their expected guests, would most likely render the valley impassable for a day or two. But the farmer, whose experience on such points trebled her own, assured her there was nothing to fear. Excepting once, when a strong south-wester set in with the new moon, he had never seen the waters out so far up the valley as his habitation; and there was consequently no danger of an impediment for such as approached his house from Duddonstone. For what chanced lower in the dale, he took little care.—*His* cattle were hovelled high and dry in his

cow-sheds; and those he took in to grass during the summer, returned to their several homesteads. —But even had he possessed a herd of buffaloes or unicorns in peril, provided their fate nothing retarded the arrival of Johnny and his wife, he would have scarce been at the trouble of securing them on higher ground.

"Uyver brave, Maister, is whiles fule-hardy," said Ruth, on hearing the farmer hold the same language to one of his men, whose experience suggested that neither hoof nor cartwheel should be left in the dale on the 20th. "The least dangers is soomtimes the warst to pass. I'v'e heard tell that in a pleasure-boating, the great Lord Nelson himsel' was afeard o' capsizing."—

Whoever else was "afeard," Farmer Atfield was not to be daunted.—With the prospect of welcoming his handsome son and new daughter, he would have defied Mehemet Ali and all his host!—

Still, Priscilla was too much touched by the kindly feeling manifested towards her by the warning of *Master* Francis, to pass it over without

notice. Her warmest thanks were due to him who so gratuitously apprised them that there was a lion in the path.—She consequently indited a few lines, to be conveyed back by Job at his next passage through Dudbourne Dale; assuring the recluse that the evil consequences he predicted, never reached so far as their habitation. And while closing her letter, the grateful girl resolved to seize the occasion of her brother's visit, to endeavour to establish a more sociable state of things between them and their neighbour at the lighthouse.

"The tides will have subsided by Christmas Day," thought Priscilla. "And I may perhaps induce Mr. and Mrs. John Atfield, (how well it sounds, 'Mr. and Mrs. John Atfield!') to walk as far as the cove, and while apologizing for Crony's misdemeanours, contrive to extract from Master Francis a civil message to my father."—

The tides might recede in due season; for over them, the lady Moon,—who, if herself inconstant, is the source of the utmost regularity in others, —*holds supreme* authority.—But all the other

phenomena of nature seemed to have broken bounds.—Before daybreak on the 18th of December, commenced a tempestuous rain, which continued without intermission throughout the day; and such was the inclemency of the weather, that even the farmer, though apt to defy the elements as unflinchingly as Ajax or King Lear, did not venture further than a visit to his cattle-sheds, and a few sheep penned to fatten in the outhouses.—Right glad was he to fling off his wet frieze coat, and creep to the parlour-fire; saying every five minutes to Priscilla, as she came and went on her housewifely errands, —"What a day for the wedding, Priss!—If this weather hold good as far 's the South, what a sad, *sad* day for the wedding!—Lucky we 'd made up our minds, lass, not to keep it till they arrived: for dang me if I could find it in my heart to be merry with such a hurricane beating again' the house!"—

"But it will not last,—it cannot last,—father!" cried Priscilla,—as a fresh volley rattled against the new window-panes, as if to test their solidity.—And *when she found* her prognostications negatived by

the setting-in of an evening still stormier than the day, she hastened to bring her needle-work to the parlour, to chat away her father's low spirits.—

When the darkness of night arrived, the persevering rain became more and more dispiriting; for lo! the voice of the storm was loud in Dudbourne Dale. At Midsummer, there is something soothing in lying awake with the windows open, listening amid the hush of nature to the regular ebb and flow of the sea, breaking on the distant shore.—But though pleasant to be reminded *then* that the mighty ocean rolled at so short a distance, it was less satisfactory now that its roar was intermingled with the bellowing of the wind and beating of the rain.—A pack of war-dogs seemed to have broken loose, and to be raging over flood and field.—

"What a journey for them, poor things!" mused the farmer, with a shudder, as he sat slowly rubbing his knees before the fire. "Why here 's even Crony deserted his place on the mat, and come crouching to the fire."—

On hearing honourable mention of his name, the

lurcher raised his muzzle from between his forepaws, to listen either to his master's holding forth, or to the sheets of water suddenly thrown at the windows, as by some over-cleanly housewife;—soon glad, however, to resume his comfortable snooze.—

"At all events, father," observed Priscilla, hoping to cheer him by reference to the wedding party, "if they had such rainy weather for going to church as has befallen us here, they do not begin their journey northward 'till to-morrow.—The first day for Mr. Egley! But a whole month for us, in compensation!"—

"And a pleasant month they're like to find it, if we're to judge by the onset!" cried the old man, peevishly.—"What in the wide world shall we do to amuse this Lon'on lass, whom her cousin spoke of as such a merry-maker, if we've nothing to show her in Dudbourne Dale but a wide water-course, and are forced to paddle to kirk in a boat?"—

"Not quite so bad as *that!*" cried Priscilla, smiling at his petulance.—"If the spring-tide *should drive up* the waters, before Sunday all will

he high and dry again.—Trust to me, father,—trust to *me*, as Noah did to the raven!—I *promise* you dry land, for Sunday, for early church!"—

The churchwarden listened, smiled, and believed.—He was much in the habit of smiling at his little daughter, and believing in her words.—Had old Ruth, the lame Xantippe of the cove,—or her patron, the weather-wise master of the lighthouse,—or even the parson, (as Farmer Atfield exclusively designated the vicar of Duddonstone,) predicted a cataclysm, and Priscilla stood out for fine weather, her father would have scorned to provide himself with an umbrella!

But his face lengthened a little, when, on the 19th, Jem, the cow-boy, (who had been despatched into Duddonstone to inquire for letters, and bring back a few articles bespoken by their new Mrs. Glasse,) returned with a terrified face, and news that in coming round the point called the Hutch, one of the narrowest openings of the had been forced to wade the Dudbourne the old *not only in* danger of being carried away with her

torrent, but had lost hold of his basket; by which mischance, a letter, bearing the London post-mark, to say nothing of a packet of groceries and a parcel from the linendraper's, were carried off at the rate of fifteen knots an hour towards the Irish Sea; with only a faint chance, that, beaten back by the tide, the basket, with the contents washed out, might be found bobbing on the waves!—

A sad affair!—Not alone because the lost letter might contain important intelligence relating to the travellers, and even news that the journey, or perhaps the wedding itself, was put off; but because, such being the state of the road, it would be impossible for John and his wife to proceed further than Duddonstone.—The light cart belonging to the Nag's Head, engaged by the farmer to bring them from Duddon Bridge, would be carried away by the current almost as easily as the basket of groceries!—

At this grievous intelligence, Priscilla hurried into her own room, to conceal her tears; convinced *that the London* letter—now, alas! floating on the

waters—bore, somehow or other, reference to the promised visit of Mark. — And while leaning against the window-sill to verify the state of the weather, she perceived with dismay, that the partial gleam which the setting sun, even when sinking behind torrents of rain, contrived to throw slantwise into the valley,—in summer representing a golden ray, in winter only a brighter streak amid the gloom,—was reflected on a boundless looking-glass!—Within the last two hours, the waters had risen so rapidly as to be visible from her chamber-window as far as her eye could reach!—

"Who told ye there was a block clood a-hanging oor the hoose?"—cried old Ruth, who, embittered by the recent changes in the establishment, neglected no occasion of playing the Cassandra.—"Ma' be the ools skritched and the oold dooggie doog his grave for nothing!—As sure as Good's above us, muss, the eend of a's beginning in Doodbo'n Dal'!"—

Prissy had no time to lose, in combating the old *woman's superstitions*.—She wanted to be with her

father.—She wanted to refer to his experience.—She wanted to know what further precautions should be taken against the rising of the flood; which, though the house stood too many feet above the level of the valley to place it in jeopardy, was already sufficient to obstruct all access to their dwelling.—By a mere chance, they were victualled to stand a siege. But how were they to communicate with Duddenstone?—how to warn their dear ones against proceeding further?—or explain how painfully they were circumstanced?—

"You should ha' told me, lass,—you should ha' told me!" cried the old man, when at length, sobbing on his shoulder, she related, word by word, the message of which Job the fisherman had been the bearer.—"The fellow at the lighth'us could ha' no bad motive, nor want to mislead us.—And he 's been a seafaring man, they say: a generation more weatherwise than folks o' the inlands.—You *should* ha' told me, lass, and then I'd a been sleeping *this night* alone in Dudbourne Dale, without *feeling at my heart* the gnawing pain that ne'er

falls to torment it when then it floats on is in danger."—

"And do you think, father, that any persuasions in the world would have induced me to leave you here alone in such a strait?" exclaimed the affectionate girl, clinging closer to his side.

"If mischief's decreed, child," rejoined the farmer, "better it fall on the mossy trunk, fit only to be cut down for firewood, than on a young branch, whose leaves are yet green!—God's mercy forgi' me, Prissy,—but I feel I've been too uppish o' late.—I've neglected the Lord's business for my own.—Even in his house, and with his word spoken in my ears, my thoughts was gaddin' hitherward,—devising how best to cloak our homeliness in the eyes of James Egley's family.—And is it not written, 'Pride goeth before a fall?'"

"No, father, no!—It was not pride that tempted you;—that is, not *undue* pride. You wanted only *to make your* son as comfortable under your roof *as he is under that of his benefactor.* You

his young wife to be pleased with his father's house, and his father's people."—

"You say it kindly for me, Prissy!—But I won't deny that there was more o' the leaven o' human vanity at the bottom o' my doings, than beseems my gray hairs.—Yet who has received more warnin's than I have, that in the brightest of our summer days a storm is at hand!—It was when my wedding-day was fixed,—my prospects in life fairly made out,—and my new home smiling at me with open arms, that a sudden crash involved me in ruin;—depriving me at a blow of all I held dear in this world,—a brother,—a plighted wife,—my worldly means,—my family credit"—

"*A brother?*" exclaimed Priscilla, who, from the reserve maintained by her father concerning the events of his early days, had been led to believe him an only child.—

"A brother, lass;—and a crueller enemy never raised hand against me.—But, not a word of him just now, Priss!—With the hand of GOD pressing on *my* rooftree, I'd fain be in peace and charity

with all men.—Of my second judgment, my dear daughter, I can better bear to speak. For with the thought of *that* mingle no harsh resentments.—That blow was stricken from above!—While all was prospering with me, Priscilla,—even but as yesterday it prospered,—with a blessing upon me and all that was mine,—it pleased God to remove my wife from my arms,—to deprive my children of their mother,—and leave me a heartbroken man, to battle with the trials of life!"—

Priscilla drew nearer to her father, and inclined her head dutifully and affectionately on his hand.

"And after those two terrible lessons," he resumed, "*how* could I dare to fancy myself once more strong and independent; and, forgetful there was a GOD above me, say of my children and my fortunes, 'Thus and thus shall it be!'"—

CHAPTER VIII.

According to the law of nature, a child should derive counsel and succour from its parents.—But how often in the course of life do parents obtain from their offspring such solace and support, as enable them to defy opposing evils!—By the time old Atfield had listened for an hour to Priscilla's professions of filial devotion, he felt soothed and strengthened, and submissive to the Divine will.

When bed-time came, and their family prayer was at an end, he advised her to retire, as usual, to rest.—Though the hurricane raged more furiously than ever, what watch or vigil of theirs would avail to divert a single rain-drop from its course?

"The men have been a-bed these two hours," *said the* farmer. "Bid Ruth and Martha also *endeavour* to sleep,—that they may be stirring

betimes—for I foresee an anxious day.—And so God rest ye, Priss, and give his angels charge concerning ye."—

"You apprehend danger, then, my dear father?"—

"Not danger of life and limb.—The brook never yet rose within six feet of the foundations of my house."

"Reuben Dorr's cottage and the row of huts below Duddon Force, must be surrounded with water, if Jem's account can be relied on," said Priscilla, trying to speak with composure.—

"Surrounded? — more like swept away!"—responded the farmer, in a hoarse voice. "But Reuben Dorr was warned it would be so, sooner or later, before a stone of his cottage was laid.—And yet he would not be persuaded."—

"Poor souls,—poor souls!—Six young children in that house—in the others, twice as many!"—murmured Priscilla. "But no help of ours could have reached them!"—

"May their reliance have been, as mine is, on *Him that is mighty* to save!"—rejoined the farmer.

—"Whether a house be built among the high places, or like the bird's in the fallow, unless the Lord keep the city, the watchman watcheth but in vain.—Good night, Priss.—If the waters continue to gain ground to-morrow, I don't doubt one or other of my friends at Dudd'nst'n will beat their way here, and give us advice and help."—

Another half-hour, and all was still in the house. But this only rendered more fearfully audible the raging of the wind through the valley, and the gusts of rain with which it lashed the windows.—It seemed impossible that the New House, which stood detached, could hold its ground against the tempest. But in that part of the building, no one was lodged; and the older portion of the tenement was firm as the rock with which it was incorporated.—Grateful therefore were the thanks to Providence of Jacob Atfield, that the mischance had not occurred a week later; with four or five strangers within his gates, lodged in the condemned house.—

But though Priscilla judged it kinder to wean

convinced by her father's assurance that they stood beyond reach of the torrent,—whose roar was audible above the howling wind and beating rain, like that of some beast of prey in a forest, —the very soul within her trembled.—What would she have given, as she endeavoured to look out into the darkness, to have discerned but a single star twinkling amid the gloom,—an eternal star,—inspiring recollections of that mighty past whose immensity appears like permanence, and hopes for that mysterious future whose glories are immutable as the past.—For alas! *her* destinies seemed to be already partaking of the colour of her father's.—In the full fruition of her wishes, on the eve of the greatest enjoyment conceded to one of her years—reunion with the object of a blameless attachment, — to be thus cruelly tormented !—

In spite, however, of her fears, in spite of the evil prophecies which Ruth had grumbled in her ears throughout the day, in spite of the restlessness *with which* old Crony, who usually slept at

the foot of the stairs, chose to follow her into her room, and crouch down by her bedside,—the usual drowsiness of night came upon her. Resolved, in case the tempest under which the house seemed rocking, should increase, to betake herself to her father's room, she lay down in her clothes; and while listening and listening to the gusts of the hurricane, and commending to Heaven in her prayers all those who, at that moment, might be exposed to the perils of the sea, her senses became gradually deadened, and she slept.—

How long—who can say!—A sudden shock, a shock as though heaven and earth were coming together,—a stunning explosion as of some vast powder-magazine,—suddenly jarred the troubled souls of the inmates of that fated house!—In a moment, all were collected below: the farmer and his daughter believing that an earthquake had taken place,—the servants loudly exclaiming that the day of judgment was at hand!—

"Hark!" cried old Atfield,—raising his withered *hand, which* trembled while he spoke.—"It is not

thunder—it is no earthquake.—I hear the rushing of a mighty torrent."—

And Priscilla heard it too,—as though the fountains of the great deep were loosed.—For during her short interval of rest, the wind had in some degree lulled, and the rain slackened: so that there was no difficulty in deciding that the roar of waters driving along the dale, and filling it with sound and fury, must proceed from the bursting of the lake through its embankment.

Many years before, such a catastrophe had been predicted by the engineer under whose direction the lighthouse was erected; and on mentioning the prediction jestingly to Mark Egley, he had pointed out to them that the natural embankment which retained its waters above the valley, was indeed dangerously worn by the mining of centuries and agglomeration of water occasionally produced by thaws and floods. A lower issue, secured by an abutment of solid masonry, ought, he said, to relieve the pressure.

Before Prissy had time to utter a syllable, her

father snatched up his hat, and rushed forth; and by the single light burning on the table, the faces of those he left behind might be seen blanched into the whiteness of death, while awaiting the doom he should announce on his return.—To each of them, every second of his absence appeared an age!—

At length, his hurried and irregular footsteps were heard approaching; when Priscilla cautiously opened the door of the room, lest the violent draught from without should extinguish the light.—But the man who entered was excited beyond the influence of minor cautions!—Staggering to a chair, he covered his face with his hands, to hide the first tears which had found their way out of his eyes since the death of his wife.—

"My poor lass!—my poor young happy Prissy!" said he, leaning over the head of the weeping girl, who was already on her knees before *his* knees.—*And the* mutterings of old Ruth, that "she had *told 'em no* good 'ould come o' tempting providence," were almost unheard.

"How long to daylight?" cried the farmer, starting up and drawing nearer the candle to look at his watch; when he saw, to his grief, that two hours had yet to elapse before the catastrophe could be known at Duddonstone.

"Even if our friends knew what had occurred, father, how could they reach us,—how afford assistance?" inquired Priscilla.

"'Twould be somethin' to know they wer' tryin'; somethin' to feel they wer' thinkin' of and sorrowin' for us!" he replied.—"There's a double pang, Priss, in dyin' like a dog,—wi' no one to say, 'GOD be with ye,' when the trouble-moment's at hand!"—

"You think our case a lost one, then?" inquired Priscilla, so faintly as not to be over-heard by the servants—one of whom was praying aloud for help,—the other muttering lamentations that sounded more like a curse.—

The farmer shook his head.

"The old lime-tree is torn up. The waters have *reached the garden*-hedge," said he, in a despairing *voice.*

"And are they still rising?"

Her father replied by putting forward his foot, which was drenched to the instep.

"While I stood there," said he, "they advanced midway on the path."

"Then God have mercy on us,"—ejaculated Priscilla, "for a terrible death must we die!"—

A moment's reflection served to remind her, that though in the straiter portion of the valley between Duddon Force and their house, the compressed waters might rise at a frightful rate, the moment they reached the enlargement, on the highest point of which, at a slope of nearly ten feet from the precipitous bank, rose the basement story of their house, the increased area must considerably diminish the speed of their rise.—The rain having ceased to fall, she threw the first garment at hand over her shoulders, and, taking her father by the arm, went forth to ascertain the worst:—with difficulty keeping her footing on the slippery *path.*—

And, lo! her surmises were verified.—The

waters had not advanced half-a-foot beyond the spot described by her father.—

But though as yet their territory was safe, the deadly chill that struck to her heart from so great an expanse of water, — the sense that a mighty element had broken loose, and was seeking whom it might devour, — the consciousness that there was movement, (and a movement of what terrific force!) where she was accustomed to find vacancy and stillness,—made her hurry back to the house, as her father had done before, with the despair of complete helplessness.—

For it was manifest that, to find an issue, the waters, which at present were crushing and carrying all before them, must contend with the spring-tide bearing up the mouth of the valley, with all the additional force that could be derived from a south-western gale.—

"Had I taken Master Francis's advice, even though he contemplated only the hundredth part of the evil which has befallen us," mused *Priscilla*, "we should at this moment have

been passing the night peaceably at Duddonstone."

And grievous was the thought that, had she seconded his advice, her father's gray hairs might have been spared their present peril!

When the denseness of gloom around them at length yielded to the transparence of coming day, old Ruth, delighting, like the raven, in ghastly spectacles, was the first to totter forth for a survey. But on her return, so incoherent were her ejaculations, and so eloquent the shudder she was unable to repress, that Priscilla could picture to herself, unseen, the frightful aspect of that world of waters,—struggling, boiling, lashing the granite sides of the Dale,—and rising and rising, as the estuary became in its turn a boundary created by the advancing tide.—

"High water at ten o'clock!" murmured Priscilla, mechanically repeating what she had heard from Job.—"Still, therefore, still, three hours of suspense *before us!*"—

And when at length she gathered courage to

venture forth into the chilly morning, and cast her eyes on the foaming torrent which shook the very ground under her feet, she could entertain no doubt, at the rate at which the waters were rising, that before the receding of the tide admitted of a partial discharge, her father's dwelling, and all that it contained, must be swept away.

Under that conviction, she hastened in search of the old man.—For the short time they had to abide together on earth, she could not bear that they should be asunder.—She wanted his firm hand to hold in her's. She wanted his shoulder whereon to weep. In death as in life, they must not be divided.—

Expecting to find him with his cattle, either providing for their safety, or perhaps taking leave of them, (for those dumb beasts were to *him* a second family,) she stole along the wet pathway towards the offices. But on opening the latch, the warm and fragrant breath of the poor animals, as they *turned in their* stalls from the manger at which *they were feeding*, on hearing her well-known voice

was all that greeted her.—She must pursue her search elsewhere.—

Guided by Crony, who hurried on restlessly before her with his ears and crest erect, as though he scented danger in the air, she paused before a rambling outhouse, recently used by the carpenters as a workshop.—And there indeed she found her father;—his coat thrown off, and the sweat dropping heavily from his brow, as, with the aid of Jem, and a thresher who slept on the premises, he endeavoured to lash firmly together two ladders left by the slaters. It was clear that he cherished the insane idea of scaling the cliffs!—

"My dear, dear father,—this is mere waste of time!" exclaimed Priscilla.—"The utmost height of these ladders is not five-and-thirty feet,—and the level of the cliffs sixty!"—

"St. Bee's pulpit, child; you forget St. Bee's pulpit," cried the old man, adverting to a slab, or truncated pinnacle, overlooking the orchard from about half the height of the cliffs,—which, *according to Job*, (a native of the Dale, and well skilled

in its legends,) was the spot from whence the Cumbrian saint addressed the population of Duddonstone.—

"But even were it possible to steady the ladder, father, the ledge is so narrow!"

"It contains footing for you and the women," interrupted the farmer.—*You*, at least, could be placed in safety."—

"In the upper story of the house we should be equally safe," pleaded Priscilla.—"Even if the waters should reach the ground-floor,"—

"If the waters *should* reach the ground-floor," again interrupted her father, "the whole premises would vanish like a wisp o' straw!—The new house, standing out from the cliffs, by admitting the waters in the rear, renders the whole insecure. What do you see floating past you? Not only the trees torn up by the torrent,—but fragments o' poor Reuben Dorr's dwelling,—and the wrack o' furniture washed down from the houses under Duddon Fasce! *I thought* just now, (God grant I may be

been deceived,) that one o' the objects eddying in the current was a human body!"—

Priscilla remonstrated no further. It seemed to comfort the old man to be up and doing;—though in a strait where the best doings of mortal hand were as the wavering of a reed in the wind.—

"Let him aloon,—let him aloon, muss," muttered Ruth, who, having followed her young mistress, stood looking on. "A wi'fu' mon maun ha' his way. And whoy gainsay him? A' in this woorld 'll be the same to us at noon."

The heavy lashing of the waves, more and more agitated by every advance of the tide, accompanied by the screaming of the sea-birds driven inland by the storm, sounded like a confirmation of this gloomy menace. Involuntarily Priscilla pressed her hands to her head, to shut out a sound which was as a funeral knell to her young heart!—

"If we had only perished in the darkness!" thought she,—distracted at the idea of being carried down, first a struggling victim, and lastly a *floating corpse*, to the great deep.—"To behold

one's fate afar off, without the power to delay it by a second, is as fearful an ordeal as the felon's dreadful death."

At that moment, while withdrawing her hands from her ears, a new sound was added to the many that bewildered her senses.—She fancied she heard a shout!—She could *almost* have believed she even heard a voice addressing her by name!—But whose,—and from whence?—Nothing was to be seen on every side but those troubled waters!—Alas! what strange delusions,—what incoherent thoughts, disturb the mind overawed by the near aspect of death!—

But again, on the threshold of the house, her foot was delayed by what she no longer doubted to be a human voice!—Perhaps some friend from Duddonstone, apprized of their sad situation, cherished the hope of affording them succour!—

On raising her eyes in the direction of the sound, she perceived, indeed, on the summit of the cliffs, thrown out by the leaden-hued lowering sky that still threatened more rain for the increase of their

misery, several human figures endeavouring to attract her attention;—nor did it much surprise her to detect, in the shaggy outline of the foremost, poor Job of the cove, accompanied by one of his mates of the coble.

But the fisherman had a companion, by whom their movements were directed.—And, lo! it glanced like lightning into her mind, that the individual having authority over them, could be no other than their neighbour—Master Francis!—

"God be thanked!" ejaculated Priscilla, clasping her hands.—"He is a man of sense and experience; and has Christian feelings in his heart."

As she spoke, a large stone having a paper bound to it, fell at the foot of the cliffs. It contained a few words inscribed in pencil, addressed to herself.—

"If you will confide in our assistance, not a minute must be lost, for the waters are rapidly gaining ground,"—said the paper. "Job asserts *that you have* ladders on the premises.—Let what

over men are with you, hasten to bring them to the foot of the cliffs immediately, under St. Bee's pulpit."—

Priscilla had no need to go in search of her father. With the aid of his people, he was at that moment bringing the ladders to the spot designated; and after learning from his daughter what had occurred, and perusing the letter, the old man hastily waved his hat to their friend upon the cliffs, in token that their purpose was understood, and the offer of their services thankfully accepted.—At such a moment, he was not likely to distinguish Master Francis from the mariners of the cove.

Before, indeed, he had time to question Priscilla, they perceived that one of the party was in the act of being let down by his companions to the stone called the Pulpit, by means of tackling prepared for the purpose; and though poor Prissy concealed her face with her hands, to avoid the frightful spectacle of a fellow-creature dangling in the air, to whom the slightest want of presence

of mind on the part of his comrades, must be fatal; the farmer, accustomed to see such feats performed by the coves' men for the sake of such poor booty as sea-birds' eggs, entertained little alarm for his safety.

The object of his descent soon became apparent, when a double scaling-ladder was lowered by his comrades; one end of which he with some difficulty grappled to the hollow ledge of rock on which he was standing; and after a short pause, in which his occupation could be only imperfectly scanned by the anxious observers, a second stone brought them a second missive, desiring that the ladders from below might be hoisted up by Atfield and his companions, to ascertain the possibility of bringing their project to an issue.—

"Who is this stranger that espouses our cause so warmly?"—inquired the farmer in a tremulous voice, of his daughter,—perhaps secretly surmising the truth:—while Priscilla, dreading lest a precipitate disclosure might abate her father's desire *to profit by his* generous efforts, replied evasively,—

"No doubt some neighbour of the two fishermen. I have sometimes seen him rowing out to sea in the life-boat, with Job and Long-armed Gib."—

That the tackle and ladders belonged to the lighthouse, and the life-boat placed under the custody of its guardian, instantly occurred to poor Atfield, to enlighten whatever doubts might remain in his mind.—But at that moment, an over-ruling fear repressed every impulse of human passion. His darling child was in danger; and had the Evil-one himself presented means for her rescue, he might have demurred, ere he found courage to reject them. With some difficulty, the ladders were placed against the rock: and, as predicted by Priscilla, fell more than five feet short of St. Bee's pulpit!—

But though the low-sailing mists which since daybreak had hovered over Dudbourne Dale, so as now and then to conceal the cliffs from view, rendered it next to impossible to discern what was going on above, Priscilla had such firm faith in the will and skill of the Admiralty official, that

even now, she did not give up her cause as lost.—And, lo! as if in repayment of her trust, a partial clearance of the fog having placed Master Francis once more before her, she saw that Long-armed Gib had joined him on the ledge; and that by their united aid, the scaling-ladder by which he had descended, was re-swung, and firmly grappled to those steadied below by Farmer Atfield and the thresher.

A joyful consummation!—But still more joyful when the master-spirit by whom the arrangements had been planned, put to the test in person the security of the ladder, which looked like a narrow thread vibrating between the earth and sky. Like one accustomed by a sailor's life to such perilous descents, he was on terra firma almost as soon as Priscilla had turned away her head in consternation, to avoid witnessing some fatal catastrophe.

"Thank ye,—thank ye,—and God bless ye!" cried the farmer, seizing the stranger by the hand, and concentrating the excitement of his feelings in a *hearty smack* of the palm.—"If we can get

these poor souls up only as far as the pulpit-stone, 'twill be a reprieve I had thought past praying for."—

While he was yet speaking, a sudden swell, produced by that of the tide at the estuary, or some further breach of the banks of Duddon-water, caused so frightful a rise, that scarcely four feet of dry land divided the house and the torrent!—The garden hedges were now under water; and several sheds at the lower part of the premises swept away. —The waters of the Tarn, blackened by oozings from the heath and peat earth, rendered the aspect of that terrible Inundation still more gloomy: and to be snatched into the cold and dark abyss by a force against which there was no contending, while the man she loved was approaching the spot full of hope, and confidence, and affection, was a fate that amply justified the eagerness with which Priscilla listened to the instructions afforded her concerning the mode of adapting herself to the inclination of the ladder,—which Gib maintained above, while *her father and* Master Francis held it safe below.—

At first, the poor girl insisted that her gray-headed father should be the first to ascend. But of this neither of them would hear.—

"*You* must be the first," said Master Francis, addressing her in an authoritative manner. "But I promise you that the moment you are in safety, I will not stir from this place 'till your father is by your side."

Perceiving her still irresolute, he added, in a lower voice, an argument which he knew would be convincing with her generous nature, "*Your* light weight will serve to test the ladder, my dear," said he, "before we risk your father's life."

And the tone in which the expression, "my dear," escaped his lips was so thoroughly paternal, that Priscilla felt doubly disposed to obey.

A few words to the farmer explained the clear and ingenious views of their deliverer; and though the very heart within the old man contracted with terror at the idea of seeing his girl adventure alone up that precipitous ascent, (a height which both were *in the habit of* daily contemplating as unscalable as

the skies)—the firmness of their assistant,—his own knowledge of the agility and strength acquired by his daughter from her country breeding,—and, above all, his trust in the Hand that is mighty to save,—inspired him with courage to say to Priscilla —"Now then, lass!—a stout heart and a firm foot! —One kiss, one last kiss before ye start—and then, GOD's Mercy be with ye!"—

A minute afterwards, and the eyes of those present were averted from the ladder; while the being so dear to all remained suspended, where the slightest stumble or dizziness must dash her to pieces at their feet!—

Poor Crony, forcibly withheld by the thresher from following his mistress, uttered a piteous howl, on seeing her pursue her way, where to follow was impossible.

No wonder if others beside old Ruth regarded that melancholy cry as an omen of further ill!—

CHAPTER IX.

A MOMENT afterwards, and a triumphant shout burst from the little group assembled in Dudbourne Dale (if dale that could still be called which presented the appearance of an agitated lake), on beholding Priscilla safe on St. Bee's pulpit!—No one seemed to think it extraordinary when the honest fisherman by whom she was received and assisted in the most difficult effort of all,—the step, or rather struggle, that removed her from the ladder to the ledge of rock,—took her into his rough arms, and gave her a hug of gratulation.

According to the strict letter of his promise, Master Francis insisted that the farmer should next ascend. — In vain did old Atfield insist on the women being first placed in safety.—No!—a promise *was a* promise. *He* must be the first.

And the next he was. But though *his* head was steadied by custom, his aged foot was not so firm but that those below held their breaths while he cautiously felt his way up the ladder, in a manner how different from the intrepid agility of his daughter!—And during those anxious moments, Priscilla remained half distracted on her knees, with her face close pressed against the cliff:—nor was it till locked in the old man's arms, with his tears pouring down upon her head, that she found strength to offer thanks to GOD for their preservation.—

Both father and daughter now expected that the next person to join them would be one of the women. But, to Priscilla's surprise, the white head and sun-browned face of Master Francis appeared above the ledge.—

"Time enough,—time enough!" he replied to the expression of her hopes that those below would not be left to their fate.—"I will be back with *them* the moment you and your father are safe. What *you have* still to go through, is half what's

his escape; bidding his poor old churchwarden remember, that since it was the Lord's will to take from him his pleasant home in Dudbourne Dale, he had another waiting for him at the Vicarage.

Jacob Atfield could reply to so much goodness only by the eloquence of his overbrimming eyes.—He was still too uneasy on Priscilla's account to do justice to his feelings, or direct the attention of his friends to his generous preserver; or he would have perceived, while depositing his chilled and awe-stricken daughter in the chamber of dais of the Nag's Head, that Master Francis and the fishermen had disappeared.

It sufficed to explain to his friends that he was every moment expecting the arrival of his son John and his bride at the inn, to satisfy them it was the best place for him and Prissy: and, at the instigation of the Duddonstone doctor, the agitated girl was speedily placed in a warm bed, and left to herself.

Too much has been already said of the terrible

scenes in Dudbourne Dale, (*far* too much perhaps for the patience of the reader!) to admit of adverting to the horrors related by the farmer, and echoed in sobs by Martha. The whole day scarcely sufficed to describe what had occurred, to successive audiences of such of the population as had not proceeded to the mouth of the valley, or summit of the cliffs, to view the scene of desolation. And rumours of the catastrophe having now spread far and wide, the peasants of the environs kept flocking in, till the market-place was thronged as for a fair.

But of all this excitement, Priscilla Atfield was happily unconscious. Thanks to the aid of opiates, she slept, or dosed, throughout the day; though, for some inexplicable reason at such a time of consternation, the bells of Duddonstone were ringing a merry peal.—It was only towards evening that a young, fair, and gentle woman, who had been watching for some hours by her bed-side, on seeing her eyes open and her composure completely restored, ventured to whisper, in answer to her anxious *inquiries* after her father,—"He is with his

son, my dear sister.—Thank God, we have arrived in time to comfort you under your affliction!"—

Escorted by their friend Mark Egley, the newly-married pair had, in fact, made their appearance within an hour after the safe arrival of the farmer and his family;—thus happily spared the moments of suspense that must have awaited them, if apprised of the Dudbourne Dale catastrophe while the destinies of those so dear to them were still at stake.

The emotions attending a family reunion of such a nature, must be left to the imagination of the reader.—That afternoon, the partial subsiding of the waters on the ebb of the tide, though it did not admit of penetrating into the valley, enabled Farmer Atfield and his son to examine from the adjoining heights the scene of ruin; when it was ascertained that, though the whole of the old house and a portion of the farm-buildings remained standing, the new mansion was utterly demolished, the embankment and orchard swept away; and that *there was little* chance but that the cattle had

perished in the flood.—Of Ruth, nothing further could be surmised; the only indication of a living thing about the premises being afforded by the piteous howling of poor Crony, proceeding from one of the upper rooms.

Already, Job had petitioned to be slung down at day-break on the morrow, to determine more clearly the state of affairs. And when John Atfield, touched by his generous spirit of enterprise, pressed upon him a handsome sum in remuneration of his previous exertions,—"Na, na, yoong mon!" was the reply. "Twa penny-fees for one deay's wark be one moor than enoogh! I've been paid twoice o'or a'ready by my neighbour Maister Francis."—

"Your friend, the keeper of the lighthouse?" inquired young Atfield, addressing his sister and Mark Egley, who had already found worlds to say to each other, on subjects which the unlucky loss of the London letter, two days before, left unaccountably unexplained.—

"My friend, the keeper of the lighthouse!" replied Mark, affirmatively, when at length his at-

tention could be obtained.—"And an excellent old fellow, too, I can assure you."—

"His deeds have proved it," rejoined young Atfield. "But what can account, on the part of a stranger, for all this generous exertion in my father's behalf?"

"Say in your *sister's* behalf!" cried Mark, pressing the hand of Priscilla in his own, a *little* more tightly than was necessary. "I'm convinced, that all the old man has done for the family, is in gratitude for Pr——, for Miss Atfield's kind treatment of his dumb favourite."

"I'm afraid, my dear Mark," retorted John Atfield, "that, in the days we live in, men are not quite so chivalrous!"—

"Or half such good Samaritans.—Granted! But how else do you account for the watchfulness which enabled this man to ascertain the exact moment for being of use, and the only mode of effecting his purpose?"—

"*That* we must ascertain from himself!" replied *his future* brother-in-law, rising as if to go in

search of his benefactor;—a little to the discomfiture of Mrs. John, who seemed to think that, since the county of Cumberland contained such fearful elements of destruction, any well-dressed inoffensive young gentleman walking along the Queen's highway in that mountainous district, might be carried off by a torrent, and heard of no more. But Mark Egley laid a detaining hand upon his friend.—

"No need to look after him *now!*" cried he. "Master Francis is off to his business at the light-house; to which the Dale-road being cut off, he and those who go in search of him have a wild-goose chase to make, over moorlands, mosses, and stone-walls. — To-morrow, let us all visit him together."—

But on the morrow, the visit became needless.—Just as they were preparing for the expedition, (the farmer renouncing for that purpose any immediate examination into the state of his property, while Mrs. John was to occupy the interval of their absence in despatching to Milbank a brief account

of their misfortunes, and entreating Mr. Egley's sanction to their offer of a permanent home to the farmer, with whom the bridegroom proposed to share the last shilling of his stipend,) a letter was placed in the hands of the old man, which affected him more than all the messages of kindness put together which he had received that morning from his friends.—With what reason, the reader shall judge.

"The changes of fifty years," ran the tenour of the epistle, "by converting two active striplings into grayheaded men, caused us to stand side by side yesterday,—*brother*,—without your recognizing the unhappy being against whom you have so many causes of offence.—That the inner man of Frank Atfield is as much changed as his face, you will know by the humility with which he now places himself before you, to implore you on his bended knees, to read this letter to an end.—

"Of my former conduct, brother Jacob, I can say nothing in excuse, without blackening the *memory of one* who is gone to her account; and

who, ere she died, deserted her husband as wantonly as she had deserted her lover.—This one fact may perhaps convince you that I was the tempted, not the tempter.—The money of which you believe that I deliberately robbed you, I swear before GOD, was honestly expended in the factory; which no effort of mine availed to rescue from its involvements.—Not so much as the bare means of maintenance did I carry with me in my flight from Skipton; and when deserted by the unfortunate woman for whose support I was labouring day and night, I vowed to live upon bread and water till, by the sweat of my brow, I earned back the amount of which I had been the means of despoiling my brother.—

"Half a century has since elapsed. How I have worked,—how I have wanted,—how I have hearded,—would take too long to tell.—Some ten years ago, by adding together the savings of my pay, prize-money, and blood-money, I contrived to make up so nearly the sum, that I took courage to seek you out,—traced you from Skipton to

Duddonstone,—and was on the point of throwing myself on your mercy, to beg for pardon and peace.—

"But while praises reached me from every side of your worth and industry, and fondness as a husband and father, I heard also so much of the wrongs you had suffered in early life, and of your implacable resentment, that my courage deserted me.—I saw you from a distance, brother:—my heart yearned towards you, as when we played together at our poor mother's feet. And having seen you, how could I abandon the spot where you were living, and where the children born unto you, who are all that will remain with our blood flowing in their veins after we two are dead and gone, were growing and prospering?—Just then, the building of the lighthouse was determined on. I had friends in the committee at Lloyd's, and was well known at the Admiralty:—I will not tell you *how* well known, or you might perhaps think I was bragging!—But I may at least observe that, *while serving* my own purposes, I have done good

service to the country. — To cut matters short, I applied for the place of keeper, and obtained it; and have since abided near you, breathing the same air, and trusting some favourable chance might yet dissolve the barrier which my own faults have been the means of creating between us.—

"But why, you will say, reject the olive-branch offered by yourself in that neighbourly gift of fruits of your raising?—Because the very man who brought it, repeating the words of your servant Ruth, acquainted me I might think the more of the gift, because it was seldom Farmer Atfield extended his hand to a stranger: having been soured in his youth by the ingratitude of a rogue of a brother, to whom he had shown some forbearance in not sending him to the gallows!—

"Would not your fruit have choked me, had I eaten it under the impression that you still hated and despised me?—

"What I experinced when that girl, whom all the country round represented to me as an angel, crossed *my threshold*, bringing with her her father's look

and voice, and I dared not fold her to my heart and call her my own dear niece, I will not attempt to tell you.—Whenever she has since vouchsafed me tokens of kindness, it has been as though a second Spring brightened my dim old years.

"And now, brother, to the point of my letter.—The hand of the Almighty has deprived you of the hard-earned fruits of your industry. But the sum bequeathed you by my poor father is waiting to replace them; more than doubled by the accumulation of interest for the last five-and-forty years.—To repay this sacred debt, I have denied myself all but the bare necessaries of life. You know it, brother;—for when the parish claimed of me an undue assessment, I told their officer that my wretched slip of ground supplied my maintenance. Great, however, as my privations have been, they are repaid this day; in the belief that your last years will be rendered happy by the restoration of your own.

"*That you should* restore me, in return, the *place I once* occupied in your love, I neither ask

nor expect.—But it would be something to know, in the secluded home I have made unto myself, that your thoughts were less bitter against one who has expiated, in sackcloth and ashes, the transgressions of his thoughtless youth."—

Having perused this letter as speedily as was compatible with the untutored simplicity of one who had not, like his brother Frank and his friend Jem Egley, added great experience of the world to the homely teaching of his youth, Farmer Atfield was divided between the joy of finding that he should not become a burden on his son, or be forced to diminish a shilling of Prissy's fortune in bestowing her upon Mark, (who, with his grandfather's perfect approbation, had already asked her hand;) and of discovering that the brother, his implacable resentments against whom had often weighed upon his conscience, still lived, to forgive and be forgiven.

With as little circumlocution as the occasion admitted, he now related to his son, and future son-*in-law*, the repentance and atonement of [illegible]

beloved brother Frank, who, tempted by a woman, had expiated his weakness like a man.—

"Let us go to him this moment!"—cried John Atfield.—"Let us bring him here, to become one of us, as though he had never been estranged!"—

"And only let the old fellow need the support of *my* right arm in the cares or struggles of life!" cried Mark, rising to bear him company.—"But for *him*, my poor Prissy might be at this moment beating about among the surges of this confounded coast!"—

Priscilla, too, and Rose, entreated permission to bear them company in their expedition to the light-house.—

But the farmer chose to go alone. "The errand is mine!" said he. "No one but Him above must witness the meeting betwixt the brothers!"—

It was a sad disappointment to the young couples when, many hours afterwards, and in the dusk of *evening*, the old man returned, alone, from his visit; —*evidently so powerfully* moved, that they scarcely

liked to express their vexation. — Mark was, as usual, the first who spoke out.

"You should have brought him back with you, sir!" said he. "Consider how eager we are to express our gratitude to him who preserved your life, and that of our dear Priscilla."

"How was he to quit his post at the lighthouse?" demanded the farmer. — "Though lame Moggy boasts of having discharged his duties during his absence yesterday, Frank wouldn't be persuaded to trust her again. But you'll see him to-morrow mornin', children, you'll see him to-morrow mornin'. And what's more, you'll soon see him for good and all.—My brother's agreed to give up his place, and we're to jog on together to the end of our days.—I'm not made, Johnny, for the town-life to which you, and my old friend at Milbank, and Prissy's husband, there, ha' been good enough to invite me. — I'm country-born, — country-bred. — To live aught-where but i' the country, 'ud shorten my old days."

"*At all* events, sir," exclaimed Mark, "

me that you're going to risk your life again by building up the old house in Dudbourne Dale!"—

"No, lad!—The Almighty has laid a finger o' wrath o' the place, and I care not ever to see it again.—I couldn't a-bear it.—My poor old servant was found this afternoon a corpse among the ruins, with our faithful dog watching, moaning by her side."—

"Poor Ruth!"—murmured Priscilla, mingling with her tears a thankful thought of those who had preserved her from the same destiny.—

"And so," resumed the farmer, endeavouring to clear his glistening eyes, "Frank and I've determined, (sin' at three score years and ten we're to begin the world again,) to go back to our native place, and buy ourselves some cozy nook at Skipton, where we may sit in the chimney-corner and talk over old times.—The house need'nt be so small, children, but that there'll be place for all o' you, (and plenty o' grandchildren too, I hope,) *when you* come and spend your Christmas-time *with the two old* fellows; who'll have nothing

else to look forward to but your happiness in life."—

Johnny Atfield felt a little disappointed at a project which he knew would be a sad mortification to the house of Harmer, Egley, and Co.—But he had never yet ventured to contend with his father's determinations.—

"At all events, my dear father," said he, "you and Prissy will return with us in a day or two, to set Mr. Egley's fears at rest, and celebrate my sister's wedding under his roof?—My uncle will be able, during your absence, to get through your business hereabouts; and change of scene is absolutely necessary to my sister."—

"We shall neither of us be the worse for 't, I fancy!" rejoined the old man, with a sigh.—"In a few days time, therefore, we 'll be off.—But I must first go and spend a day at the lighthouse. I've promised Frank, to sleep under the roof where he 's passed such cheerless days, such sleepless nights."

And Mark and Priscilla earnestly entreated us

of the party.—How large a share did that same rdicted lighthouse maintain in the history of r courtship!—

'Best leave us to ourselves!" rejoined the ner—"Young wheat and old don't thresh well ether; and Frank and I 've a deal o' life to live r again.—Somehow or other, I don't seem to as if I could ever see enough o' my brother."

'Then all is well!" whispered Priscilla to him seemed to feel he could never see enough of .—"But for the fate of poor Ruth, I should ost be reconciled to the INUNDATION, which, ng so many evils, has wrought this mighty d!"—

'Not a word of the evils *now!*" rejoined the ner, affectionately kissing her forehead. "This , my child,—nay, this whole Christmas-time,—is od to PARDON and PEACE."

THE END.

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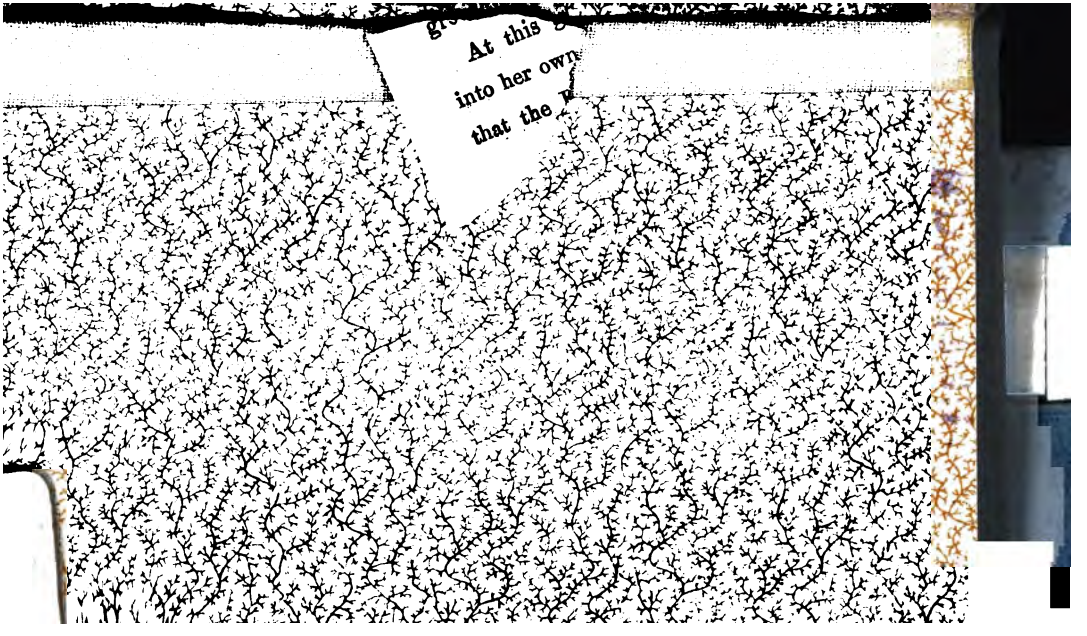
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